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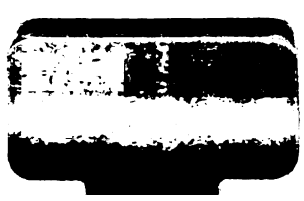

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(In association with the British School at Athens)

THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM

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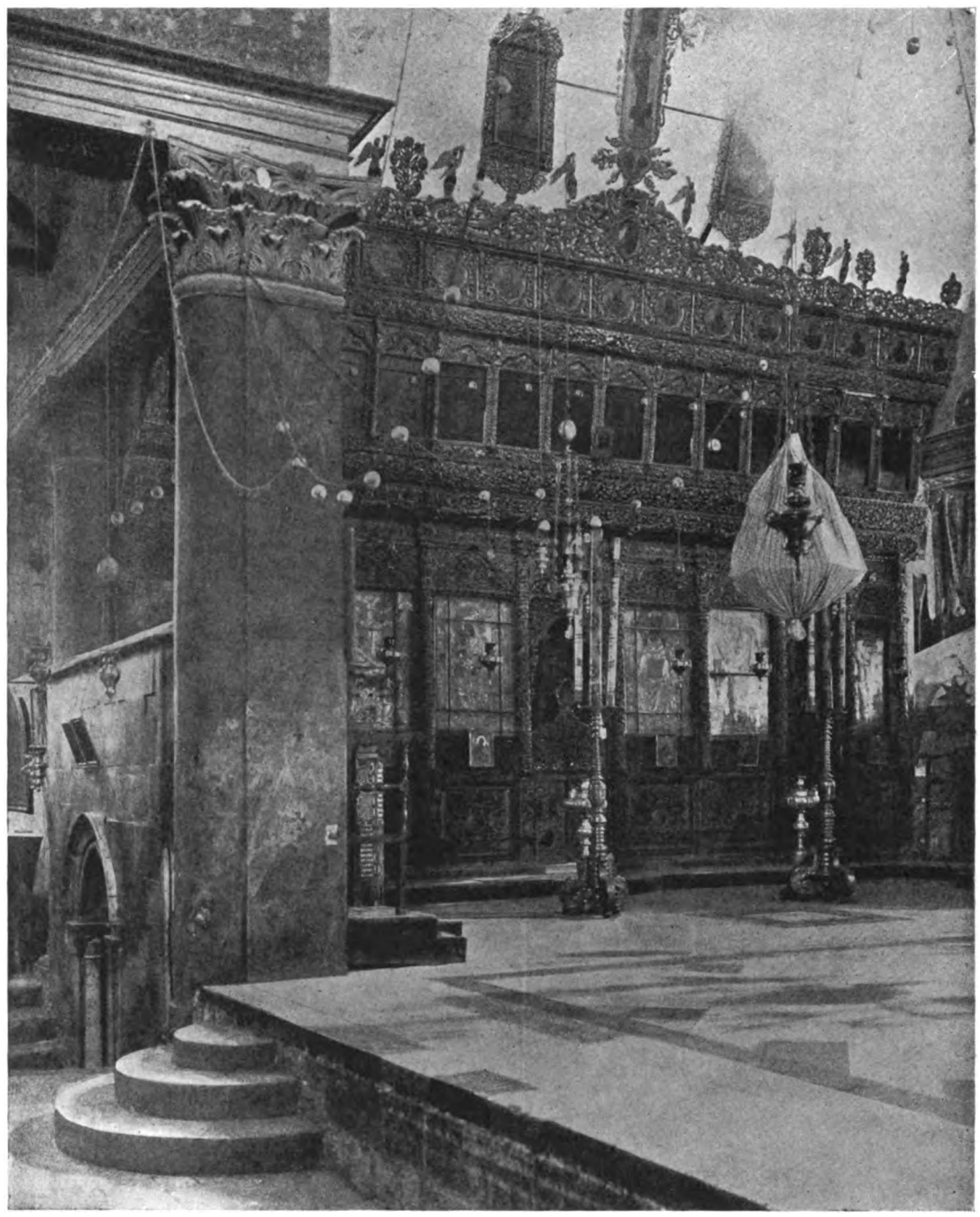
CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM. FRONTISPIECE.



VIEW FROM NORTH TRANSEPT, LOOKING TOWARDS ICONOSTASIS.

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UNIV. OF MICH.

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THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM

By W. HARVEY, W. R. LETHABY, O. M. DALTON,
H. A. A. CRUSO, and A. C. HEADLAM

Illustrated from Drawings & Photographs
by W. HARVEY & others

Edited by
R. Weir SCHULTZ
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A General View of the Church and Monasteries.

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Fig. 1.—View of Town from Tower of Greek Convent.

PREFACE

In the early part of the year 1908, a few archæologists and others interested in Early Christian, Frankish, and Byzantine Studies met together to discuss what could best be done to further research in this important branch of archæology, which, it was felt, had been somewhat neglected in this country.

As a result of this meeting, a Fund was formed under the presidency of Edwin Freshfield, LL.D., whose keen interest in the subject has long been honourably known. A Committee was appointed to administer the Fund, and steps were taken to begin active work. The British School at Athens placed at the disposal of the Committee a sum of money which had been collected under its auspices for the pursuit of Frankish Research in Greece,[1] and also the small balance, remaining over, of money which had been got together in connexion with Messrs. Schultz and Barnsley's Byzantine Mission to Greece many years before.

An appeal was also issued for further funds, and the Committee was enabled to set aside a sum towards paying the expenses of a visit to Palestine by Mr. William Harvey, a Gold Medallist and Travelling Student of the Royal Academy of Arts. Mr. Harvey spent a considerable portion of his time between December 1908, and March 1909, in making drawings of the

[1] This sum was utilized for the purpose of sending Mr. Ramsay Traquair on a further expedition to Greece, a portion of the result of which has recently been published in the Annual of the British School at Athens (No. 25, p. 177 et seq.) under the heading of *Laconia: The Churches of Western Mani.*

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Church at Bethlehem and of the remaining mosaics on its walls.[1] He also made a careful investigation of the structure and prepared a report on the same, and in addition took a number of photographs of the building and its details. His work has been utilized in the preparation of this book,[2] and, in addition, several members of the Fund have contributed to the volume.

The thanks of the Committee are due to the subscribers to the Fund for making the publication of this book possible; to the various authorities who granted Mr. Harvey the necessary facilities to enable him to pursue his studies; to residents in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, who made his work easier by their kind help; and especially to Mr. Martin Sprengling, of the American School of Archæology at Jerusalem, for his friendly aid in the transcribing and translating of the various inscriptions.

Thanks are also due to the "American Colony" at Jerusalem for permission to reproduce two of their photographs in this work (Frontispiece, and Fig. 1, Plate 7); to the Royal Archæological Institute for the use of Fig. 13; to Messrs. Virtue for Fig. 5 and the view facing page v, taken from *Picturesque Palestine*; and last, but not least, to Mr. Batsford for his interest in and careful attention to the details of the publication.

[1] Mr. Harvey has also made a careful and detailed study on behalf of the Fund of the interesting buildings of the Temple Area at Jerusalem, and this material the Committee hopes to deal with later on.

[2] Mr. Harvey's drawings of the structure, which were sent home in pencil form, have been carefully copied in ink for reproduction by Mr. M. R. Rowlinson.

FIG. 2.—VIEW OF ARMENIAN CONVENT FROM GREEK TOWER.

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CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM

Chapter I

A PARTICULAR DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH[1]

THE WEST FRONT AND ATRIUM

The Church of the Nativity, or of St. Mary, lies at the eastern side of the town of Bethlehem adjoining the market-place, of which the ground covered by its ancient atrium forms part. A few uprooted bases of columns, of approximately "Attic" contour with square plinths in one piece, that lie scattered about near the church, and three cisterns with rough stone heads rising about a foot above the level of the modern yard paving, suggest that the ground was once arranged in the traditional manner with an enclosing colonnade.

A modern graveyard on the north and the buildings of the Armenian Convent on the south encroach upon the surface of the atrium, and with other modern structures disfigure and obstruct the west façade of the church. The south part of the west wall and one of the two small doors flanking the central entrance are entirely hidden by the masonry of the Armenian Convent, while a large mass of masonry conceals half the central doorway and the larger part of the small door to the north of it in the same wall. Of the three doors, enough is still visible to allow of their approximate widths and positions being determined. Their exact height cannot be measured without excavation, as the ground level has risen to the extent of about a foot above that of the church floor and probably more than that amount above the former paving of the atrium.

The front wall of the church, that is, the west wall of the narthex (see Plate 5) in which the three entrance doors are situated, has undergone much alteration, and except the actual masonry of the door jambs, lintel-arches, cornices, relieving arches, and the masonry of a window, now blocked up, immediately adjoining the central door, the stone-work is of a patchwork character. The parapet of the narthex is modern, and is structurally and architecturally insignificant. The old stones in the wall, which average about 2 feet 3 inches in height, are considerably larger than the modern ones beside them, or the stones in the practically uniform masonry of the church

[1] The description of the church, as contained in this chapter, was written at Bethlehem by Mr. Harvey from actual investigation and examination.

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eastward of the narthex. The moulded cornices above the doors are curiously rough in execution, and contain only two mouldings of curved contour—a cyma recta near the top, and a cyma reversa below — among a number of small square fillets of monotonous equality. The brackets below are merely shaped to the usual outline of Roman "trusses," and have no scroll carving or other ornamentation upon them (see Plate 5, Fig. 4). In spite of the assistance given by the wall of the Armenian convent, and the bulky modern counterfort, the wall bulges under the thrust of the ill-arranged mediaeval vaulting of the narthex. The central door has been almost entirely built up during the Middle Ages, a pointed arch with a plain roll moulding about its bottom edge indicates that the opening was decreased to a great extent during crusading times. The present still smaller doorway is of later date. A door of iron slabs and bars riveted together closes this main entrance against the intrusion of fanatics or robbers. Although the original cornice of the wall, if it had one, has disappeared, and the present mediaeval vaulting hides any traces of the ancient roof that may remain upon the old masonry of the inner west or east walls of the narthex, it is not improbable that the chamber was originally provided with a lean-to roof of timber covered with lead or tiles, and terminating either in a projecting eaves, like that of the present main roof, or a stone cornice-gutter. The comparative thinness of the west wall, which now bulges under the weight of the vaulting, seems to point to some such arrangement.

The large masonry of which this wall is built, and which continues throughout the whole narthex on both its east and west sides to its present roof level, may indicate either an earlier period of construction for this part of the building than for the small stone masonry of the rest of the church, or both works may have been undertaken at the same time, and the larger stones have been selected to give greater dignity to the front of the building. There is no trace of Byzantine influence in the details of the doors and their cornices, etc., which resemble late Roman work in proportion and arrangement.

THE NARTHEX

In the interior of the narthex less of the old work is apparent than in the external wall. Immediately opposite the main entrance from the west, a large square-headed opening without mouldings or adornments of any kind opens into the nave. This doorway, which approximately matches the size of that from the atrium, and the wall in which it stands to the height of the roof of the narthex (or approximately the cill level of the upper windows of the nave), is composed of large block masonry exactly corresponding to that of the western wall. Above the height of the narthex roof the wall rises to the

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height of the gable of the roof in smaller stone masonry like that of all the eastward parts of the church.

In the eastern face of the wall, within the church, pilasters, matching the positions of the colonnades dividing the nave into its five aisles, are built in the large stone masonry, and seem to show that colonnades of the same position as those now existing, if not these actual ones, were planned at the time that the narthex was built. In plan the narthex runs the whole width of the five aisled nave of the church, it was originally in all probability open from end to end without partition walls, and was provided with three doors to the church corresponding in position to the three leading in from the atrium. The central door already mentioned is probably original. Those to the north and south have been walled up. A recess with a bracketed lintel of Gothic type, perhaps inserted by the Crusaders, stands in the position that would have been occupied by the northernmost of the three doors of the original structure. Two walls, one towards each end of the narthex, divide the interior into three parts, of which the central one only is now used as a vestibule to the church. The spaces thus cut off are given up, on the north to the Franciscan Guest House, and on the south to the Armenian Convent. In each case two chambers, one above the other, have been built, the dividing walls and the vaulting being all of the character and type of the modern house construction of the village. The lower chamber on the north, now used as a fuel store for the Franciscan convent, contains some fragments of frescoes drawn with considerable ability and decorative style upon both the ancient east and west walls, and upon the mediaeval vaulting of the ceiling. The frescoes, now very much decayed and broken away, were designed in a Byzantine style; the figures, standing upright in somewhat severe positions, have costumes painted to resemble embroidery with jewelled borders indicated by little spots of paint. The large blocks of the masonry of both walls of the narthex are here clearly visible where the thin coat of plastering has broken away, and are pitted at intervals with small holes as if for the fastening of metal cramps for a marble sheeting in the interior. In some of these holes a small fragment of broken metal remains projecting from the wall, and is held in place by a little piece of marble wedged into the hole on top of it. The upper chamber is also vaulted, but is covered with plaster and whitewash. Both chambers on the north are entered through other rooms in the Guest House, and have no communication with the interior of the rest of the narthex. The chambers on the south are similarly arranged, but both have openings to the north into the central space, the lower chamber which serves as porch to the Armenian convent having a door, and the upper chamber a grated window. A partition reaching up to about half the height of the vaulting of the central

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chamber screens off a place adjoining the Franciscans' side for the squad of Turkish soldiers who patrol the church. The whole central part is roofed in three bays of intersecting barrel vaults of approximately semicircular contour at the height of the vaulting of the upper chambers at the north and south. There are no arch-ribs in the vaulting of these chambers.

The west door from the narthex to the nave of the church is formed of carved wood with arabesques and crosses in the panels (Fig. 3), and an inscription in Arabic and Armenian along the top rails. Only the upper half of the door remains, the lower parts of both leaves having been broken away and replaced by rough planking. A small opening in the northern leaf now admits to the church. The inscriptions have been translated afresh by Mr. Martin Sprengling, of the American School of Archaeology in Jerusalem.

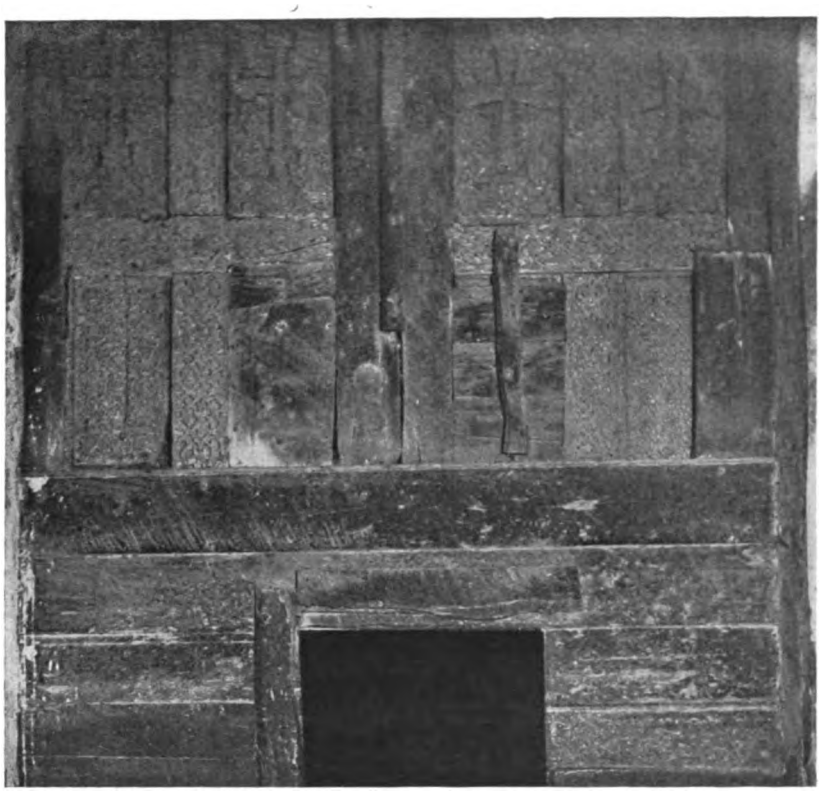

Fig. 3.—Upper Part of Door from Narthex into Nave.

The Arabic inscription upon the top rail of the north leaf reads :

This door was completed by the help of God, may He be exalted ! in the days of our Lord the Sultan the King El-mu'addam in the month of Moharram. Year six hundred and four and twenty.[1]

The corresponding inscription on the top rail of the southern leaf is in Armenian ; an approximate translation is only available, as the woodwork is badly worm-eaten at this point.

In the year 676[2] was finished the door of the Holy Mother of God, by the hands of Father Abraham and Father Arakel, at the time of the Armenian King Hetum, son of Constantin. Christ God, have mercy upon the labourers !

INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH

In the interior, the church is arranged as a basilica divided, by colonnades of polished limestone monolith shafts bearing wooden architrave beams, into five

[1] El-mu'addam, the honoured or exalted one, brother's son of Saladin, reigned in Damascus 615–624 of the Arabic calendar.

[2] The date is probably in Armenian reckoning. Compare de Vogüé.

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aisles, of which the central avenue is widest and the outer side aisles smallest. At the east the central space is terminated by an apse of massive and regular coursed masonry whose width is nearly as great as that of the central span and whose height reaches to within a short distance of the tie beams of the roof. Apses similar in every respect terminate the central spaces of the transepts that branch out of the central area of the church to the north and south sides. The middle spans of choir, nave and of both transepts are of equal height and are built with masonry walls supported upon the architraves of the innermost colonnades. The subordinate side aisles are lower, reaching only a little higher than the architraves of the colonnades which are all of equal height. Windows, with arches of semicircular intrados and extrados, in the upper walls light the nave, transepts and choir, and similar windows in the lower external walls light the side aisles of choir and the eastern sides of the transepts. Each apse has three windows with arches of semicircular intrados and extrados pierced through its circular wall about ten feet from the base, though the windows of the northern apse have been blocked up and now appear as recesses only in the interior of the wall of the apse. The side aisles of the nave were formerly lighted by windows with square heads, the large lintels of which are visible in the south wall of the church (Plate 6, Fig. 5). Some square-headed recesses in the north wall in the interior of the church show that similar windows also existed there. In the gable wall above each of the three apses is a semicircular-headed window similar to those of the walls but somewhat smaller. There is no window in the western wall of the church. The joinery and glazing of the windows is quite modern and was put into its position during the present Greek patriarchate. The plan of the church is symmetrical and regularly set out to a degree very unusual in Byzantine buildings, the shafts in the nave colonnades being placed at approximately equal spans, and like all the free standing shafts in the building they are of equal girth and height. The capitals of the columns do not differ greatly from the Roman model, except that their acanthus leaves have fairly sharp serrations and that a cross upon a projecting semicircular boss replaces the usual rosette in the centre of each side of the abacus.

FIG. 4.—VIEW OF SOUTH-EAST PIER OF CROSSING; FROM S.E.

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The square central area or "crossing" formed by the intersection of the middle spans of the nave and choir with those of the transepts is bounded at each corner by a monolithic pier of the same limestone in form like a square pillar with a semicolumn upon each of two of its adjoining faces (Plate 9). Special capitals carved to fit the plan of these piers retain the character and scale of carving possessed in common by the other capitals. Modern architrave mouldings of wood in the choir and of plaster in the nave cover the wooden beams upon which the upper walls rest. Iron bars, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $\frac{5}{8}$ inch, nailed to the face of the beams, in one case, and a relieving arch of slight rise in another, may be detected behind the plaster of the walls, strengthening the beam. Two large buttresses of uncertain date which form no part of the original design of the building project eastward from the two western piers of the crossing, and the nave is divided from the rest of the building at this point by a wall running across the church. This wall, built by the Greeks in 1842, is in line with the last columns to the east of the north and south nave colonnades as well as with the two western crossing piers which are almost completely hidden from sight in its masonry and plaster. The central space of the choir has its floor raised some two feet above the level of the nave, transepts and choir aisles to allow of headroom in the stairs to the Grotto of the Nativity below and to retain a sufficient thickness of rock to support the choir paving above the grotto roof. This paving is modern and consists of white limestone slabs bordered with bands of a red brown sort and with other bands of black marble. Both kinds of limestone are found near Bethlehem. The other floors are all of white limestone slabs, rougher in the nave than elsewhere, but showing no particular design of any sort. The modern Greek screen of elaborately carved and richly gilded woodwork stretches across the central choir between the first pillars east of the east crossing-piers, and divides the sanctuary from the choir.

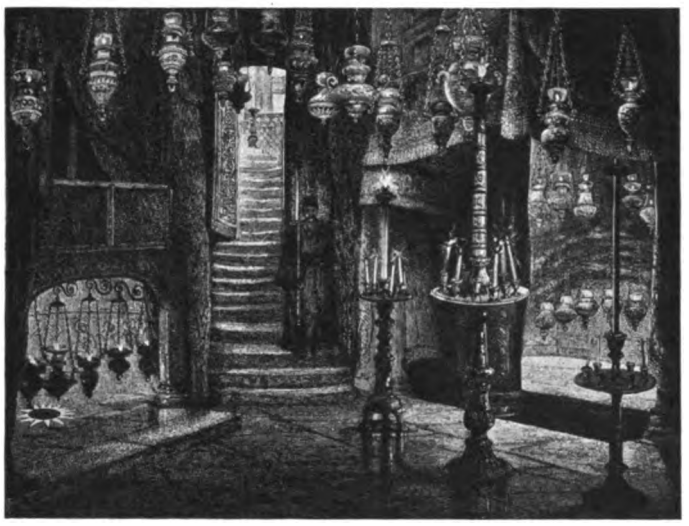

FIG. 5.—VIEW IN THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY.

THE GROTTOES

The Grotto of the Nativity lies beneath the central crossing of the church and is approached by flights of steps of red-brown limestone from the north and south side aisles of the choir. The upper steps are arranged in concentric semicircles and form a half-conical pit sunk in the floor of the church. The centres from which the semicircles are struck lie in the faces

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of walls running east and west between the piers on the eastward side of the crossing and the columns next to the eastward of them. These walls, the faces of which are lined with marble slabs, form the diameters of the semi-circular steps and contain the doors of the grotto itself. The doors are of perforated bronze about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick fitted into frames of marble which have two grey-white marble colonnettes to each jamb and slightly pointed arches rising from their capitals in the Gothic manner. The capitals have acanthus leaves carved upon them in the manner usual with Crusaders' Gothic in the Jerusalem district, and are not unlike western work. The doors themselves may be also of Crusader date, but show marked Byzantine influence in their design. Below the doors more steps (of an unequal number on the north and south sides) descend to the marble-paved floor of the grotto. Towards the east, between the bases of the two flights of stairs, is a small apse or niche hewn in the rock, the marble floor of which is marked with a silver star with the inscription 1717 ✣ HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA IESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST ✣ A few tesserae of mosaic remain upon the smoke-blackened head of the niche where many lamps continually burn. The walls of the cavern are partly lined with marble and partly covered with woven silks of bright colours or draped with stiff painted buckram. To the south-west of the foot of the southern staircase a lower grotto, to which three steps descend, contains a marble trough commemorating the placing of the Infant Christ in a manger. Marble colonnettes of Crusader period ornament the angles of the niche of the

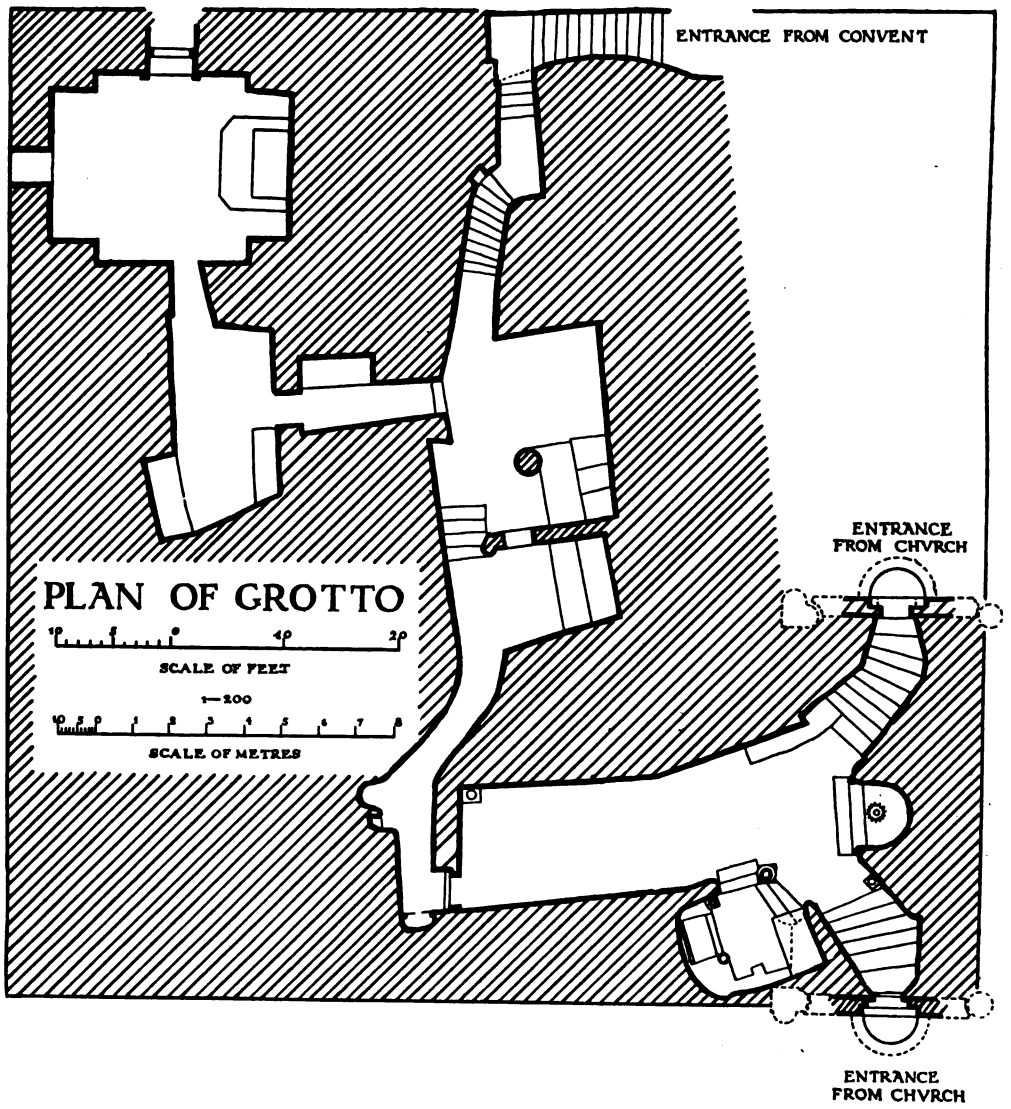

FIG. 6.

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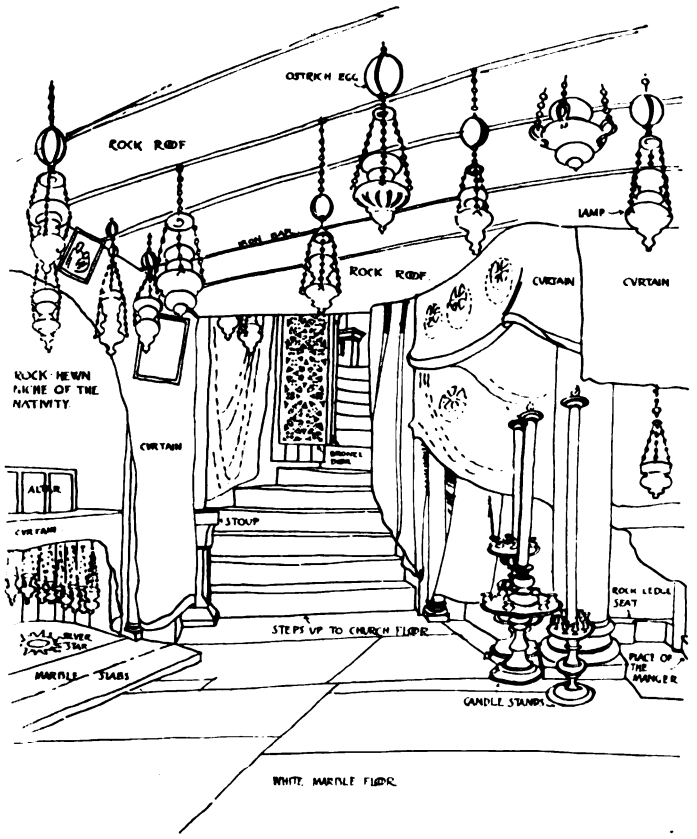
Nativity and of the cavern of the manger, and fragments of older shafts help to support the roof of the lower cavern. Two shafts have capitals similar to those by the bronze doors on the stair, but with the leaves carved to shape only and not serrated. In the north-west corner of the grotto is a hole into which the Star of Bethlehem is said to have fallen after guiding the Wise Men to the spot. At the south-west corner a door opens into a passage conducting to other grottoes on the northern side of the church. Most of these are at present bounded by plastered masonry walls in some places and in others by the rock; the roofs however are of rock throughout, except in St. Jerome's chapel, which has lately been trimmed with masonry and provided with an intersecting barrel vaulted ceiling. A light-shaft stretching up to the north and a staircase ascending to the west (though now blocked up) connect the grotto of St. Jerome with a courtyard and the old cloister of the Franciscan monastery. The floors of the grottoes are partly of limestone rock and partly of limestone slabs. Another stairway to the north-east leads up through the masonry of the foundation of the east apse into the Franciscan church. A series of burial vaults extends northwards under the nave of the church from the south side near the south apse and a branch passage runs for some distance to the west. Both series



PART OF THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY FROM A SKETCH MADE ON THE SPOT VIEW LOOKING TOWARDS THE SOUTH ENTRANCE FROM THE PLACE WHERE THE TURKISH SOLDIER STANDS

FIG. 7.

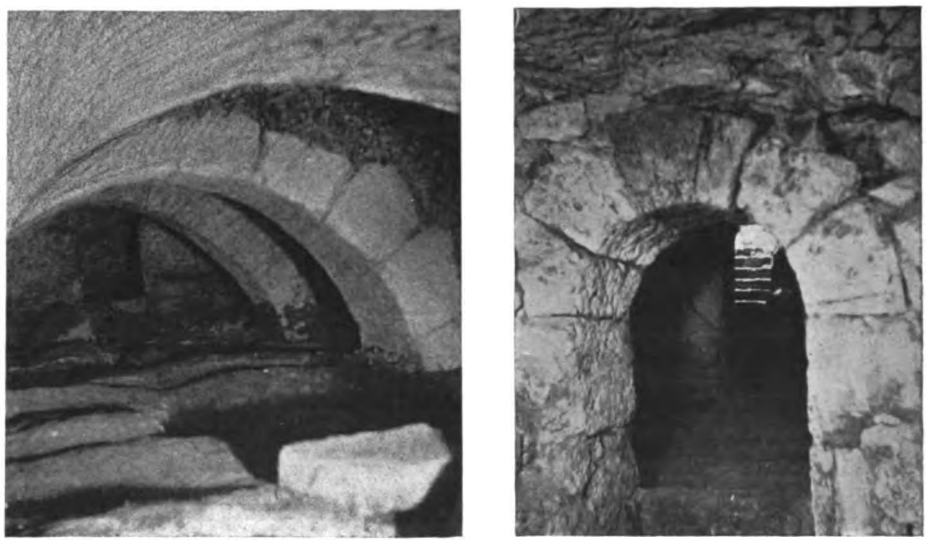


FIG. 8.—BURIAL VAULTS UNDER NAVE.

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are formed in the rock partly by nature and partly by hand. The rock roof is strengthened and the caverns divided from one another by arches of masonry similar to those in the walls of the church immediately above (Fig. 8).

THE WALLS

The walls of the church are all built of a hard local limestone, the columns being monoliths of the same material. The stone is smoothly dressed throughout without rustication or ornament of any kind. The walls rising from the level of the ground are all of equal thickness except those of the heavy masonry apses and their abutments, which are approximately twice as thick as the rest. The walls built above the colonnade are thinner than those on the ground in order to impose less strain upon the architraves below. All the walls eastward of the narthex and the west gable wall from the roof of the narthex upwards are of regular coursed masonry of comparatively small dimensions, about 1 foot 4 inches to a course. High parapet walls, obviously not of the original construction, have been added to the whole circuit of the outer walls, and parapets that may not be original stand about the tops of the apses (see Plate 6). The high walls of the central spans are all finished by the overhanging eaves of the roof and are bonded along the top by wall plates of timber. The general appearance of the walls below the parapets is such as might be presented by masonry the whole of which was built at the same time but clumsily repointed with mortar in some places and left with fine joints in others. The eastern apse seems to have been least interfered with, the other walls have all had repointing done and perhaps a few stones replaced, and in the south

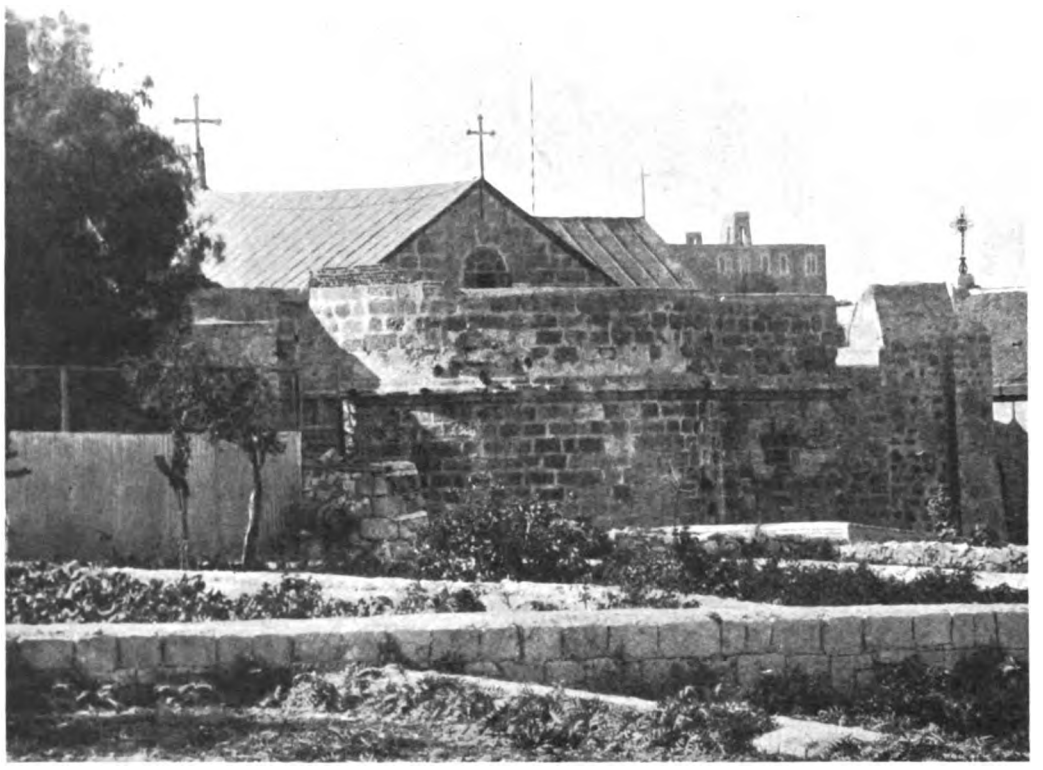

FIG. 9.—UPPER PART OF EAST WALL AND APSE FROM ROOF OF GREEK CONVENT.

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aisle of the nave windows have been blocked up in a very indifferent style. On the west sides of the buttresses of both north and south transept apses projecting stones have been left for bonding. The parapet walls have taken advantage of some of these, but are not high enough to cover the upper ones. The original termination upwards of all walls is doubtful, for although the eaves-roof of the upper part of the church may indicate the early form, the fact that the roof itself has been many times repaired and rebuilt prevents the formation of any definite opinion. The other walls with their modern parapets present even more ground for hesitation.

The apses are of masonry similar to the adjoining walls with which they bond (though not with the modern parapets), and have regular semicircular arches and semidomes built of wrought stone-work arranged in horizontal courses about a central keystone. The several stones in the semidomes seem to be voussoir shaped and not "sailed out" in the Mycenean manner, but the few joints exposed by the falls of plaster with which the inner face of the wall is plastered do not allow of a definite conclusion being drawn. The arches in front of the semidomes are undoubtedly composed of voussoirs in the usual way. Externally the apses are provided with a moulding formed of a large cyma recta crowned by the same moulding inverted (N.B. not a cyma reversa) (see Fig. 10 and Fig. 15, c). The north apse has the lower part of the moulding only. These mouldings about the apses are the only external adornments of the building with the exception of the door cornices of the west front, the whole structure being of the simplest and most straightforward kind.

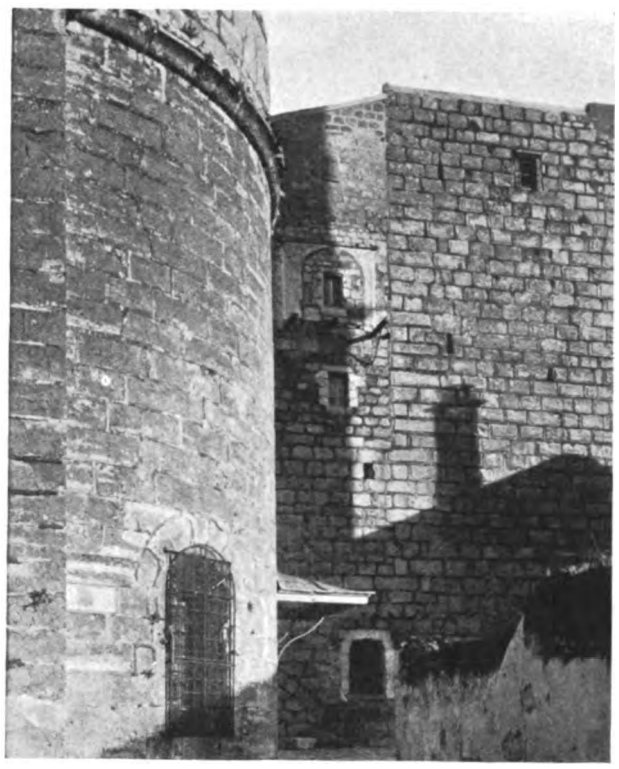

FIG. 10.—PORTION OF SOUTH APSE WALL, LOOKING EAST AND SHOWING MOULDED BAND.

THE ROOF

The high roof of the central aisle and transepts is composed of planks covered with thick lead and supported below upon a great number of small rough purlins which rest upon properly trussed principal rafters joined at their lower ends by tie beams which are strengthened by wooden brackets jutting from the walls. Timber wall plates running lengthwise in the top of the walls distri-

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bute the weight of the principal rafters. Iron straps fastened about the ends of the tie beams and over the feet of the principal rafters make the connexion secure. Other straps passed through the walls and pinned by long vertical bars of iron assist the tie beams to grip the wall plates and keep the walls from bulging outwards. The lower roofs, also of lead-covered planks, lean against the high walls of the central spans of nave and choir and against the eastern walls of the central spans of the transepts. All the timbers of the roof are exposed to view within the church. The roof has been restored within the last century and is without painting or ornament of any kind. It is all of pine wood. The high roofs covered with lead have all projecting eaves supported upon small projecting rafters at a slighter pitch than the upper part of the roof. The upper ends of these little rafters are supported on the lowest purlin, about a foot within the wall of the church.

FURNITURE AND DECORATION

An ancient font, hewn in an octagonal block of limestone of the same red-brown colour as the columns, stands in the southernmost side-aisle of the nave near to the west end of the church and to a small door in the south wall. Some crosses and an inscription in Greek are incised upon its sides, and an iron lid with a brass central panel covers its internal basin (Fig. 11). The brass panel is bossed into the shape of a crucifix occupying the centre of a Maltese cross. The remaining comparatively modern furniture of the church is of only secondary interest. The carved wooden screen dividing the Greek sanctuary from the choir is a large and elaborate work executed with infinite pains and covered with scroll work in all its parts (see Frontispiece). The canopies of the main and side altars of the church are to some extent similar in style but of decidedly inferior workmanship and possess no great interest artistically, and compared with the massive simplicity of the church's structure they seem flimsy and tawdry. A cistern-head

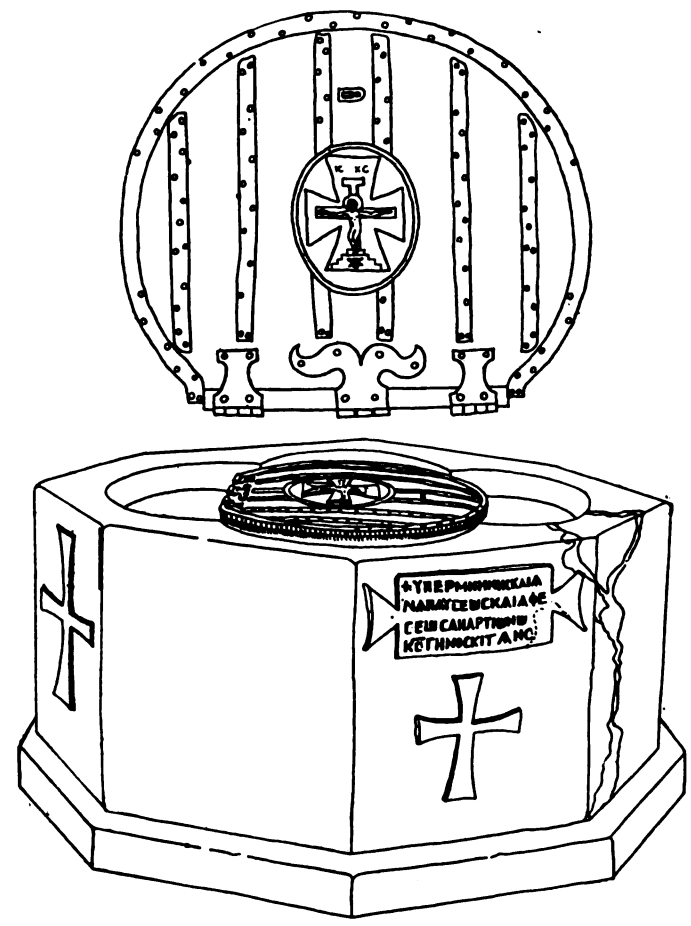

FIG. 11.—THE FONT AND COVER.

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stands in the north choir aisle near to one of the Armenian altars, but is absolutely plain and insignificant. Chains of lamps and ostrich eggs are suspended from the rafters and add an air of pleasing orientalism to the quaint and gloomy interior in which the sunbeams sparkle the more by contrast with the grimy walls and timbers. Pictures of saints in a late Byzantine style have been painted upon some of the columns, but few are of any great interest and most are badly blackened or have been purposely erased. Two shields and helmets sketched upon one of the nave columns (Fig. 12) give a hint of crusading times and recall the fact that the church though built by the East was for many years in Western hands.

The principal decoration of the interior and that for which its plain wall surfaces are most suited, and to receive which they were in all probability designed, are mosaics of coloured and gilded glass. The greater part of the mosaics have been broken away, and such fragments as remain, though not much damaged in themselves, are allowed to lie under a thick layer of dust, through which they can only be dimly discerned with the help of a field glass.

W. H.

FIG. 12.—CRUSADERS' COATS OF ARMS ON COLUMN OF NAVE.

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Chapter II

A GENERAL HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT

Earlier writers accepted it as without question that the existing Church of the Nativity was that erected by Constantine between 327 and 333, and, after an interval of criticism and doubt, recent inquirers are returning to this view. Strzygowski speaks of it as this "unique, oldest and worthiest amongst the remaining monuments of Christian art. It has been pushed aside and covered by a mountain of doubt, yet it is a sign-post of development and a document

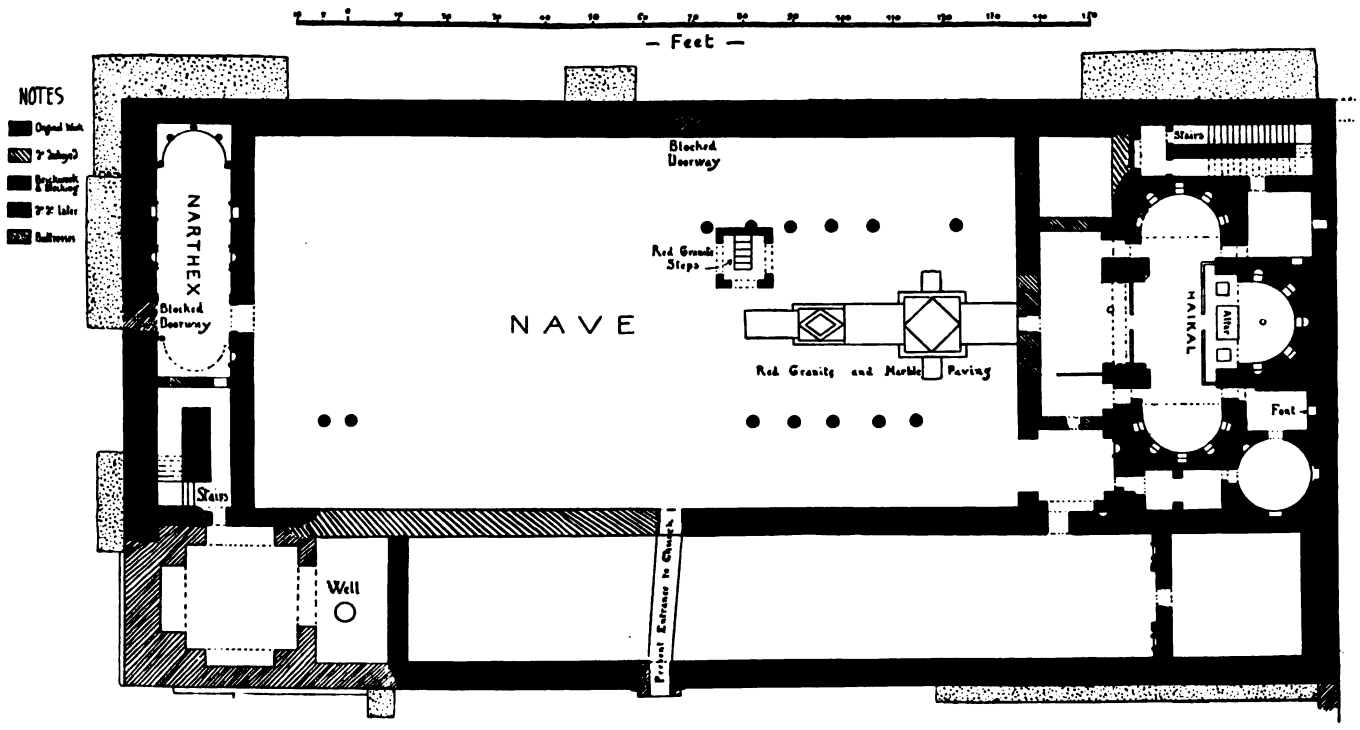

Fig. 13.—Plan of the White Monastery at Sohag, Egypt.[1]

powerful in its evidence." Of its remarkable plan, which has apses to the north and south as well as to the east (a scheme which was followed at Nola in the Church of Paulinus, *c.* 400, and at the White Monastery of Sohag in Egypt, a church of the fifth century), he says further: "The type was raised by Constantine to canonical importance, and the church which created it still stands at Bethlehem."

[1] From the *Journal of the Royal Archaeological Institute*, by permission of Mr. G. Hardinge-Tyler, Hon. Secretary.

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The first modern scientific history and description of the church is that published by an able English scholar in a series of articles on the Churches of Palestine in *The Ecclesiologist* for 1847.[1] This learned account seems to have been forgotten, but it was made use of by de Vogüé in his standard work *Les Eglises de la Terre Sainte*, 1860. He cites it for the inscriptions on the doors; and the French work, except for its illustrations, is largely founded on these articles, which we should be glad to reprint here if our space permitted. Both these authors, on reviewing all the evidence, concluded that the existing church was that built by Constantine. De Vogüé writes:

> "Of all the churches contemporary with the triumph of Christianity erected on the famous sites of Palestine, the only one which remains to us in any completeness is the church of St. Mary at Bethlehem."

Already when these authors wrote, doubts had been expressed as to whether the church was Constantinian, or had been partly or wholly rebuilt by Justinian. The view that Justinian rebuilt the church is based on a story given in the Arabic Chronicles of Eutychius written in the tenth century; it includes matter which is obviously legendary, such as the Emperor's execution of the architect, a story which is repeated by him of the architect of the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai.

Dositheus, the seventeenth-century patriarch and historian of Bethlehem,[2] also accepted Justinian's intervention, and, in a modified form, the tradition seems to be held at the church to-day. Mr. Harvey writes:

> "Père Legrange and Père Barnabé both think that the columns are of the age of Constantine and the apses of Justinian's time. They point out that the masonry of the apses is comparatively small, and say that such masonry is here generally late. My own view is that the whole church was designed at once, and that, with the possible exception of the narthex, it is Constantinian. Details which support this view are that the round-headed windows of the upper part of the church are approximately of the same size throughout; all the capitals of the columns have identical carving; where the walls of the choir do not have to buttress the arches of the apses they are approximately of the same thickness as those of the nave; the smaller masonry extends over all the church except the narthex, which is of larger stones; the lintels of the square-headed windows of the nave aisles are also of great stones."

Notwithstanding the strength of the internal evidence for the Constantinian date, it has been difficult to suppress doubt on certain general considerations.

1. It is definitely cruciform; thus St. Willibald (*c.* 750) says, "it is

[1] *The Ecclesiologist*, published by the Ecclesiological, late Cambridge Camden, Society. London, Joseph Masters, 1847. "The Churches of Palestine," iv, p. 127 et seq. These articles were anonymous, but de Vogüé refers to them as by Mr. Williams (the Rev. G. Williams, of King's Coll., Camb., author of *The Holy City*, see *Dic. Nat. Biog.*). He corresponded with de Vogüé.

[2] See Williams in *Ecclesiologist*.

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a glorious house built in the form of a cross." Crosses also appear sculptured on the abaci of all the capitals (Fig. 14), yet it has been claimed that the use of the cross did not go back to early Christian times.

2. Eusebius[1] associates Constantine's church at Bethlehem with another on the Mount of Olives as "places in the same region which were held in honour on account of two sacred caves. He (Constantine) adorned that cave which had been the scene of the Saviour's birth and magnified the memory of His ascension on the mountain top." "The Empress Helena dedicated two temples, one at the Cave of the Nativity and the other on the Mount of the Ascension. . . . The Imperial Mother erected a stately edifice on the Mount of Olives on the very summit. Here in this cave the Saviour taught His disciples the sacred mysteries. Thus she dedicated these two sacred edifices of the two divine caves." Now the Church of the Ascension on the summit of the Mount of Olives was a small circular building open to the sky in its central area, a church entirely different from the noble basilica at Bethlehem.

3. The rock-cave of the Nativity under the choir of the church is approached by stairs on either hand exactly like the crypts of Romanesque churches are entered, and it seems impossible that such an arrangement can have been planned in a church begun so early as 327 A.D.

I. The difficulty as to the use of the cross has disappeared, as within the last few years many early examples have been found. For instance, Constantine's cup at the British Museum, which is earlier than the year 327, has a portrait of Christ with a cruciform nimbus; and a sarcophagus relief at Berlin, which is probably still earlier, has a similar nimbus to a figure of Christ. Mr. Crosby Butler has described several fourth-century buildings in Syria on which the cross appears. Of a church at Dêr Sambil he says: "The capitals of the nave arcade are Corinthian, and the sign of the cross appears in a small disc in place of the fleuron on the abacus." "Capitals with the cross prominently carved on the echinus appear on fourth-century houses" (*Architecture and Other Arts*, pp. 95, 101). In 1902 Wilpert published an account of crosses which appear on the paintings of the Catacombs, and showed that, although the Greek or Latin cross had been supposed hitherto to be practically unknown before the fifth century, there were no less than eight examples which might be assigned to the first four centuries.[2] That the cross was in general use in Asia Minor in the third century has been shown by Sir William Ramsay.[3] As to cruciform plans,

Fig. 14.

[1] See also chapter iv, page 53, 11.
[2] *N. Bull. Arch. Crist.*, 1902.
[3] For early crosses in Syria, see *Pal. Explor. Society Q.S.*, 1900–1.

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Constantine's Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople probably had such a form,[1] and the same tradition is represented in the fifth century by Galla Placidia's tomb-chapel at Ravenna. The early chapels of the Christian cemeteries in Rome were not only cruciform but had three apses forming a trefoil, being thus a simple form of the Bethlehem type. The catacomb chapel called the Capella Greca approximates to the cross type, and the church of Jacob's Well in Palestine as described and delineated by Arculph was a perfect equal-armed cross. The trefoil plan was widely distributed in late Roman days, and we had an example even here in England, as shown by the pavement figured by Lysons which was excavated in Littlecote Park, Ramsbury.

II. As to the comparison with the Church of the Ascension, it seems from the records that the round church on the summit of the Mount of Olives cannot be the one described by Eusebius together with the one at Bethlehem. Constantine's church on the Mount of Olives was over a cave, where, as Eusebius himself says, Christ "taught His disciples." The Bordeaux Pilgrim of 333 also says: "On the Mount of Olives, where before the Passion the Lord taught His disciples, there, by the order of Constantine, a basilica of wondrous beauty has been built." De Vogüé, in considering this point, wrote: "Already in the fourth century the Pilgrim from Bordeaux wrongly placed the basilica of the Ascension, built by Constantine, at the place where our Lord taught the disciples, and the account given by Eusebius lacks clearness." He decided that Constantine's church was a circular edifice on the apex of the hill, but a further account unknown to him, written by the pilgrim St. Ætheria,[2] usually called Sylvia, about 535-540, shows clearly that there were two sites and two buildings when she wrote—one, the basilica at Eleona, a very beautiful church on the Mount of Olives; and the other, which she calls the Imbomon, at "the place from which the Lord ascended." In putting all these references together, it is obvious that Constantine's basilica on the Mount of Olives was a fine church not on the site of the Ascension, but at the cave where the disciples were taught, a site which was well known to generations of later pilgrims.

III. The other difficulty is that of the access to the cave of the Nativity being like the entrances to the crypts of mediaeval churches. These stairs, however, in their present form at least, are mediaeval, and they enter the cave very awkwardly close on either side of its altar. It is clear that these cannot be original natural entrances to the rock-cave, which was more probably entered by the passage to the north. Since writing so far I have found a confirmation of this view in the description published in *The Ecclesiologist*,

[1] That it was an actual cross has been denied; it may have been a cruciform basilica.
[2] First shown in *Rev. Orient. Chrét.*, 1904, No. 1. See also chap. iv, p. 56, VIII.

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which reads : "So late as the beginning of the seventh century there was but one narrow entrance to the cave of the Nativity, that near the cell of St. Jerome. In the ninth century we read[1] of an entrance to the south and an exit to the east. It is probable that the northern and southern entries which are now in use were first pierced by the Latins." The writer founds this view on the accounts left by pilgrims, one of whom, Antoninus[2] (sixth century), says that the mouth of the cave was narrow, and that the cell of St. Jerome was at the entry to the cave. Phocas, 1185, describes the present steps.[3]

Thus these difficulties as to the possible Constantinian date of our church disappear on closer examination, and it will be shown below that direct comparison of details with those of other early works bears out the view that it is the primitive church.

Some of the principal opinions which have been hitherto recorded in favour of its being a work of Constantine's are by Williams in *The Ecclesiologist*, de Vogüé, R. de Fleury, Strzygowski, Leclercq in Cabrol's Dictionary and Dr. A. Baumstark. Viollet le Duc and Diehl seem to hold that it is wholly the work of Justinian. That it is partly of one period and partly of another has been argued or assumed, amongst others, by Fergusson, Dehio and von Bezold, Kraus, Schultze, Holzinger and Rivoira; the last speaks of the apsidal plan as derived from Nola.

Hayter Lewis says : "I have given, in my notes to Procopius, p. 149, extracts from Eutychius as to the alleged rebuilding of the church at Bethlehem; since then I have paid another visit to that church, and am satisfied that the north and south apses at least are of different date from the nave." Mr. Harvey's detailed examination of the masonry of the church was especially directed to this point, and he came to exactly the opposite view that the work had been completed as a whole. The beauty of the plan, as well as the homogeneity of the parts, e.g. the windows and columns throughout, negative the idea of such a building having been erected at different times two centuries apart.

We may now turn from these objections to set out the case in favour of the church being indeed that which was built by Constantine. Eusebius, and the Bordeaux Pilgrim of 333, describe the building of three basilicas—the great church at Jerusalem, and the basilicas on the Mount of Olives and at Bethlehem. Only the first is described with any fullness, but the facts known of this church show how largely it resembled the church at Bethlehem.

The Jerusalem church was a five-aisled basilica built of squared stones, with the entrance doors leading from an atrium. Within, the roof had a gilded ceiling, and outside it was covered with lead. Socrates, a writer of the fourth century, says that Constantine, having built the great church at Jerusalem,

[1] See chap. iv, page 60, XVII. [2] See chap. iv, page 56, IX. [3] See chap. iv, page 65, XXVIII.

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erected another not inferior to it in Bethlehem. Eucherius,[1] a writer of the early part of the fifth century, calls the latter a splendid church.

Not only have we the written description of Constantine's church at Jerusalem with which to make comparison, but there is the basilica of St. Peter at Rome, which is fully known through old drawings and engravings. It also had five aisles, and there, as at Bethlehem, the walls above the colonnades were carried by level beams and not by arches. At Bethlehem the internal columns are uniformly Corinthian, of good style, and well understood, although simplified. Similar capitals are found in the fourth-century church of Khirbit Hâss, where "the capitals of the columns of the arcades are of Corinthian form only slightly 'debased' and well executed in fine-grained limestone. The capitals are more nearly classic in form than any others found in the churches of Syria."[2]

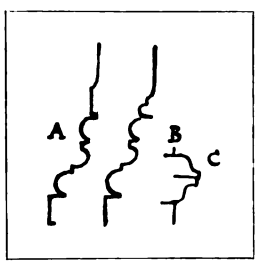

Fig. 15.[3]

The bases of the columns have a projecting fillet beneath the upper torus, a form characteristic of Syrian bases of the second century, and later, as at Baalbec, Kanawât, etc. At the crossing are four compound pillars made up of a square central pier with two attached semicircles. Pillars of this form were common in late classical art, especially in the East. In the Ephesus room of the British Museum is a Corinthian capital which formed part of such a pillar, except that the half columns are attached to opposite sides of the square pier.

Such compound pillars with the two half-rounds attached at right angles so as to form an L, are typical features in the synagogues of Palestine, most of which appear to date from the third century. These were halls, with their length north and south, and usually having a portico at one end. There were three doors of entrance and the interiors had three aisles divided by two ranges of columns. The two columns furthest from the central entrance, one on each side of the building, were of the form of the compound pillars at Bethlehem. "These double columns or pillars have been found occupying exactly the same position in every known synagogue."[4]

These associations between the early church at Bethlehem and the synagogues of Palestine are interesting in every way, and they point to the conclusion that Constantine's architect was a native of the country.

The apse pierced by triple windows appears in Rome in the ruined

[1] See chap. iv, page 55, VII.

[2] H. C. Butler, p. 94. The illustration shows that the capitals are almost identical with those at Bethlehem.

[3] In Fig. 15, A shows bases at Bethlehem; B, bases of the third century; C, moulding on the apses at Bethlehem.

[4] *Survey of Western Palestine*, vol. v. See plans of pillar at Tell Hûm, Galilee. According to the Survey, the synagogues usually had five aisles, but this is a mistake. See Sir W. Ramsay and Miss Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches*, p. 306.

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building close to Sta. Croce in Gerusalemme, and Mr. Harvey has pointed out the likeness of the Bethlehem apses to one which exists near Hebron. He writes :

" When I was at Hebron I took the opportunity of riding down to Beit Jibrîn where there is a ruined church with a great apse still standing. This apse is of well-wrought stone all being worked in regular courses. Three windows pierce the lower part of the wall exactly as in the apses at Bethlehem, except that the voussoirs in the arches above are slightly longer in the Beit Jibrîn example than in the other. Remains of a cornice of similar size and shape to that at Bethlehem project from the top of the wall. The ruin is described in Father Barnabas' guide : ' A mile from the village to the S.E. are seen on the top of a hill the picturesque ruins of the church of St. Anne, Sandahanna, built from the fourth to the sixth Century. The Apse, still well preserved, belonged, as did other portions of the wall, to a Roman building of the third Century. As the Apse was turned towards the North, the Christians destroyed it and reconstructed it piece by piece in the direction of the East. M. Clermont Ganneau discovered its original site marked in the rocky foundations by a semicircle of the same size ' (*Arch. Res.* ii, 447-431). The width of the apse is 31 feet 6 inches, and its depth a little more than half this dimension, the proportions, if not the actual figures, being extremely like those of the apses of Bethlehem."

The doorway of the Church of the Nativity is late Roman rather than Byzantine (see Plate 5). In the later art consoles disappear. The arched lintel and relieving arch are characteristic of the latest classical art. Compare the fine doorway which now forms part of the mosque at Damascus. The lack of mouldings and the square lintels to the windows of the aisles are also in accordance with fourth-century types.[1]

The building best known with which the Church of the Nativity has most in common is the Palace at Spalato, built a few years before Constantine began to reign. It had chambers with trefoil apses, much plain masonry, simple square-headed doors, with lintels made up of voussoirs, and circular-headed windows having seven or nine stones exactly like those of Bethlehem.

A church lately excavated at Gerash has points of resemblance to the Bethlehem church, being a basilica with five aisles, narrowed to three at the end, and an apse pierced by three windows.

An important record to which M. Clermont Ganneau has drawn notice may explain the true basis of the association of the name of Justinian with the church at Bethlehem. Procopius, who wrote a volume celebrating Justinian's buildings all over the empire, mentions Bethlehem, but only to say that the Emperor restored the city wall and the church of the Abbot Joannes. Whether this church is that of the Nativity or not, I cannot say, but it appears that an important decoration was added to the exterior of the Church of the Nativity by Justinian. This was a mosaic on the façade which represented the Nativity, and was in existence before the Persian invasion of Chosroes in the seventh

[1] Cf. H. C. Butler.

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century. In a synodical letter dictated by the Fathers who attended a Council in Jerusalem in the year 836—

"Mention is made of great mosaic paintings which adorned the external façade of the basilica which represented, among other subjects, the adoration of the Magi. We learn from the letter that the Persian invaders recognized their national costume in the dresses worn by the three kings, and consequently spared the basilica. This incident has both historical and archaeological importance. The external mosaic decorations may probably be assigned to Justinian's restoration, for such mosaics were quite in the style of that period."[1]

Such an exterior mosaic of Justinian's age still in large part exists on the whole western wall, above the narthex roof, of the basilica at Parenzo.

THE EXTERIOR

The whole church is of masonry, that of the west front being larger and more carefully fitted than the rest—a treatment appropriate to a façade.

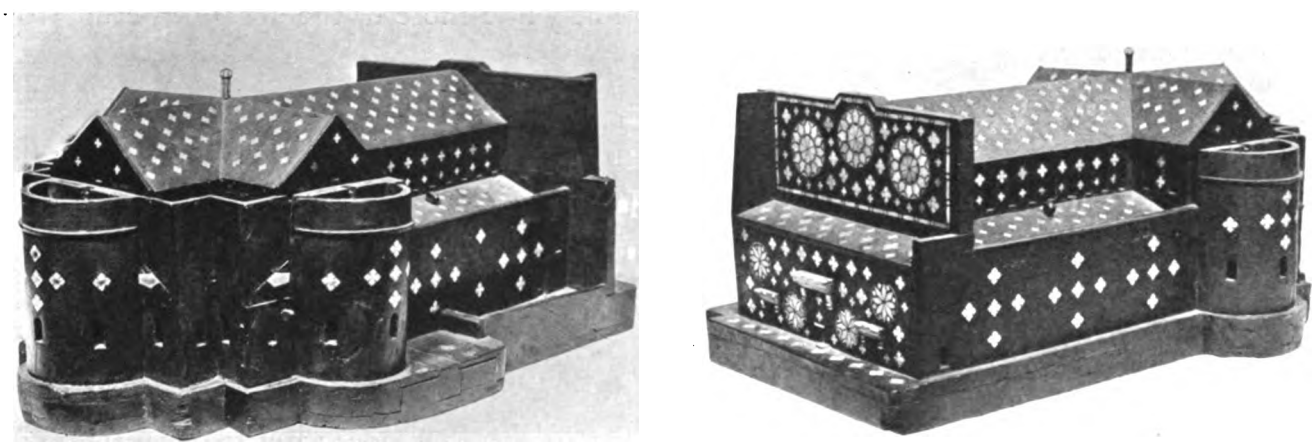

FIG. 16.—VIEWS OF THE MODEL IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

In front of the narthex was an atrium, some evidence for which still exists on the site, and parts of its ruined walls seem to have been remaining when Bernardino Amico drew his plan, *c.* 1600.

G. Sandys in 1610 described the church as entered through a portico sustained by sixteen pillars, doubtless some remnant of the colonnades of the atrium. De Vogüé's restored plan makes use of all the evidence.

Sophronius, Patriarch (635), is, in a translation,[2] made to speak of entering through a noble portico of four columns, doubtless the quadriporticus of the atrium. The gable end above the narthex is perfectly bare and unpierced by any windows, and would have made a fine field for the mosaic of the Nativity which adorned it. A row of holes, now closed by stones, may have received the slanting rafters of the narthex roof (see Plate 5,

[1] Clermont Ganneau, *Recueil d'Arch. Orientale*, 1897, and *Pal. Explor. Q.S.*, 1898.
[2] *Pal. Pil. Texts*, vol. xi; see chap. iv, page 57, x.

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Figs. 1 and 2). The front wall of the narthex contains the remains of three doorways. They are obstructed and hidden in various ways, but they are well shown on the model of the church in the British Museum. The model was there as early as 1847. Above the doors are some remnants of a moulded course of stones, probably an original eaves-course. The central door is larger than the others, but all had similar cornices. "The mouldings are hardly more than roughed out, being made up of cymas and a number of square fillets." On the middle of the cornice of the great door remains a boss intended for a head, or other ornament, in a circle (see Plate 5, Fig. 4). On the south side of this door is a small square window which lighted the narthex. Doubtless there is, as de Vogüé says, a similar window on the north side. The square-headed windows in the north and south walls of the aisles (see Plate 6, Fig. 5) have large lintels two ordinary courses deep. These lower windows are twice as far apart as the clerestory windows, which have semicircular arches, each with seven voussoirs. Exactly similar windows, again with seven arch stones, are in the apses at the lower level, and also in the three gables above the apses, north, south and east. These resemblances in detail speak of a structure completed at one time. Except for the rude cornices at the west doorways, and a simple cyma moulding forming cornice courses to the apses, there are no other mouldings on the whole exterior. The stone semi-domes of the apses do not show, for they are girt about with thick parapet walls. It may be doubted if ever there were cornice courses under the eaves of the main roofs. If there had been we might expect to find them continued across the west gable. The central roof was probably always finished with simple overhanging eaves like the early basilicas in Rome. Mr. Harvey points out that at the north-west angle of the north transept certain bond stones project in line with the north aisle wall. On the south side the parapet is carried up high, forming a screen wall to the clerestory (see Plate 6). The parts to the east of the transepts also have these high screen walls.[1]

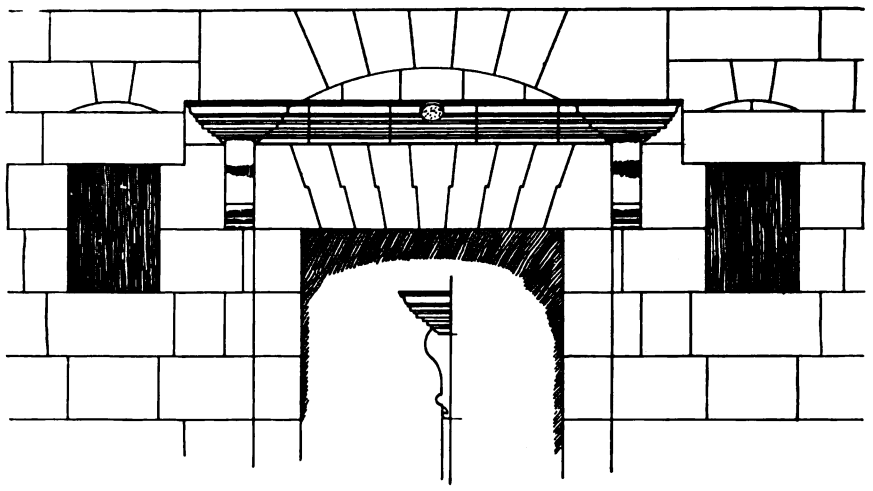

Fig. 17.

[1] See the model in the British Museum (Fig. 16).

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THE INTERIOR

The plan of the interior is very beautiful and gracious, being in respect of the three apses, one of the great types of arrangement which persisted right through the Middle Ages, in many Byzantine churches, and at the cathedrals of Pisa and Florence. Our own St. Paul's has an echo of the same disposition in the semicircular porches attached to the north and south transepts. The essential idea is the distribution of three exedras, or apses, symmetrically about a central space, and it gives to that centre, in this case the rock of the Cave of the Nativity, a marked importance. The whole plan is a combination of the central martyrion with the basilican nave. The interesting drawings

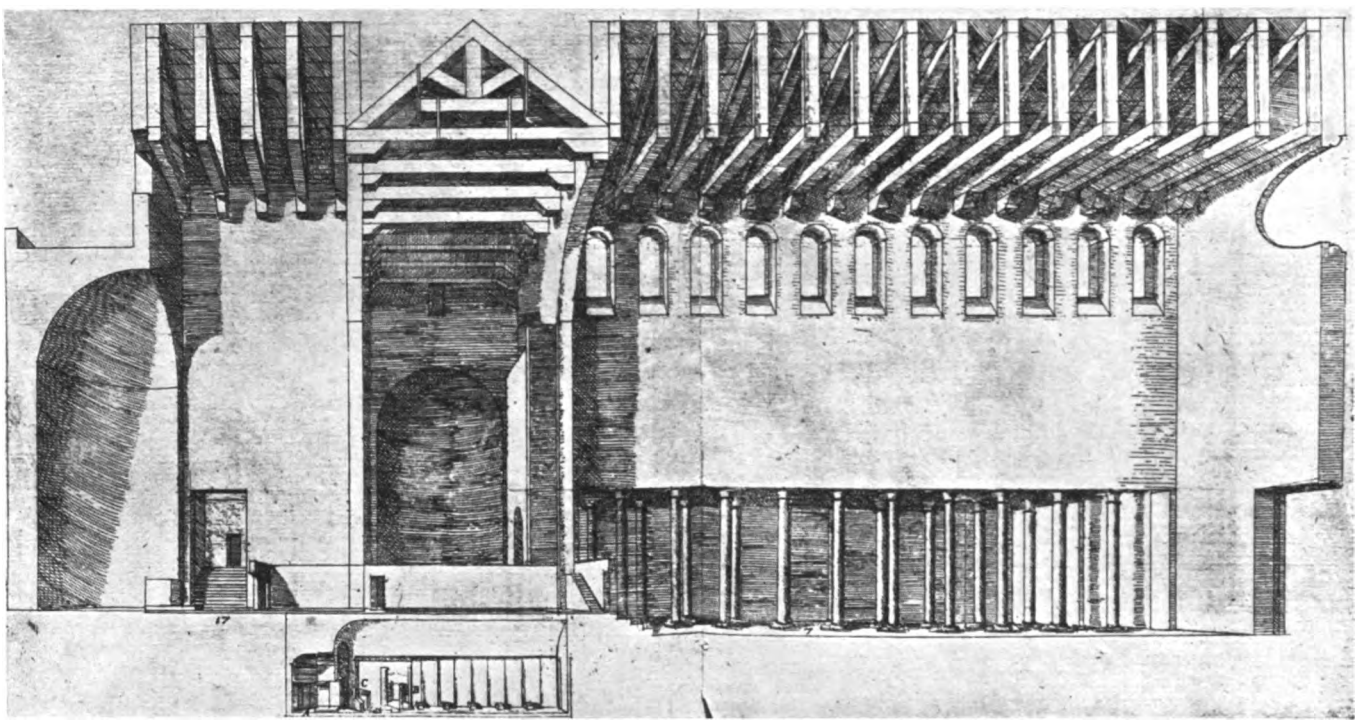

FIG. 18.—LONGITUDINAL SECTION THROUGH CHURCH.
From a Drawing of Bernardino Amico.

of Bernardino Amico (Fig. 18)[1] represent the roof as it existed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, doubtless that erected in 1478. He clearly shows that the transept was divided off from both the nave and the presbytery by large transverse arches, so that the transept roof ran through from north to south, and did not intersect on the inside with the east to west roofs. It was probably these arches which caused the angle pillars at the crossing to give way; they were subsequently strengthened by walls built across the ends of the aisles, and the clerestory windows were blocked up. These arches form another point of resemblance to the Early Christian basilicas of Rome. The ceilings must have been of wood panelled and gilded. Eusebius describes that of the great

[1] Amico Bernardino. *Trattato delle Piante et imaginè di sacri edificii di Terra Santa.* Rome 1609 (Fig. 5).

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church at Jerusalem as "panelled and carved, glittering with gold like a sea expanded overhead." Constantine's church at Antioch was decorated with so much gold, possibly of mosaic on the vaults, that it came to be called the Golden House. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem,[1] *c.* 635, speaks of the Church of the Nativity as having a panelled roof, "a beauteous work that glitters like the stars."

Mr. Harvey's examinations show that the three apses to the east, north and south are "practically identical in construction and dimensions." Their semi-domes are of wrought stone.[2]

The order of the interior colonnade has beauty and the workmanship easily meets the requirements. The capitals (Plates 8 and 9) are a simplified rather than a debased form of Corinthian, and are cut with vigour and understanding. They were thought of as masonry rather than sculpture, and already the idea of the Byzantine "impost" capital is implicit in their form. The structural fault of the classical Corinthian capital is the slight attachment of the upper carved scrolls and leafage to the solid core behind, especially at the angles. In these of Bethlehem we find a transition towards the shaped block enriched with surface carving. The ground is not excavated till it disappears, and the geometrical transition from the square above to the circle beneath is easy to trace. How the surfaces of the forms were found in the block is so apparent that I have reduced the scheme to a diagram (Fig. 20). Over the timber epistyles which carry the clerestory walls there are, at least in some places, low segmental relieving arches. Mr. Harvey traced one of them on the north side adjoining the modern iconostasis. It is of stone and is for the most part

FIG. 19.—CAPITAL OF A NAVE COLUMN, LOOKING UP.

[1] See chapter iv, page 57, x.

[2] An Armenian writer, probably of the seventh century, must refer to these when he appears to speak of the church as having vaults. He also mentions its "ninety marble columns."—Bain, in *Palestine Exp. Fund Q.S.*, 1896, p. 348.

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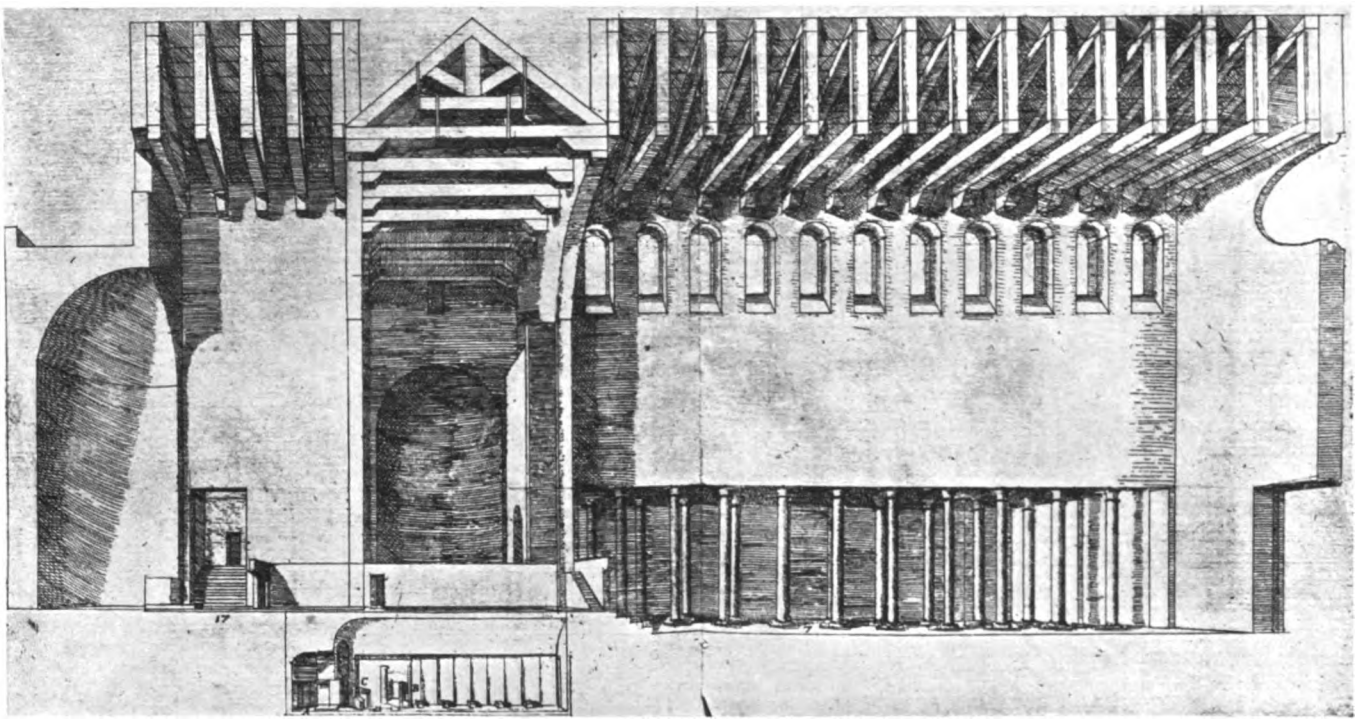

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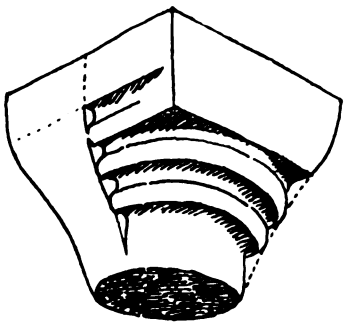

FIG. 20.

covered by the plastering and mosaic. The internal walls were entirely covered by a plating of marble in the aisles, and by mosaic above the colonnades of the nave. As pointed out by Mr. Harvey, there is still sufficient evidence to show that the interior of the narthex had its walls covered with sheets of marble, and therefore it is probable that the square doorway into the church also had a casing of marble.

Felix Fabri, in 1484, says that the whole of the interior walls were covered with marble or mosaic, the columns and slabs polished like a mirror.

From the account of an English pilgrim who visited the church in 1508 it is plain that even in the Middle Ages the mosaic had been much injured. He describes it as—

"A marvellous fair church and a right sumptuous work, there be IIII rows or ranges of pillars throughout the church of the finest marble that may be, not only marvellous for the number but for the outrageous greatness, length and fairness thereof. I never saw nor heard of a fairer little church in all my life. The Sowden was in purpose to remove these pillars. . . . Suddenly there came out of the wall a huge great serpent that ran endlong upon the right-up side of the church wall, and scorched the said wall as it had been singed with fire. The Friars dressed them to a solemn procession at our first coming, whom we followed to all the holy places with candles lighted in our hands, as always used in other places where any procession was done. And first the procession brought us to an altar in the south aisle where our Saviour was circumcised, and from thence we come to another altar on the north side where the Three Kings made ready their offerings, and from this place descending we come into a fair little Chapel, at the high altar whereof is the very place of the birth of our Lord, assigned by a hole made like a star in a fair white marble stone under the altar. This little Chapel is all of tables of white marble and the vaults be garnished with gold and byse (blue) with divers stories of as subtil mosaic work as may be. The walls also of the body of the church from the pillars to the roof, be painted with stories from the beginning of the world of the said mosaic work which is the fairest thing that can be done to any walls. Howbeit the said works be greatly defaced both in the church and chapel, for very pure age, and the said church, with all the place falleth in great decay." [1]

FIG. 21.—CARVED SOFFIT OF LINTELS OVER COLUMNS OF NAVE.

Zuallardo, who wrote what may be called the first modern description of the church, about 1580,[2] describes

[1] *Pilgrimage of Sir Richard Guylforde*, etc., 1506. Camden Society, 1851.
[2] *Il Devotissimo Viaggio di Gerusalemme*, Rome, 1587.

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the mosaics of the nave as representing the Old Testament history to the Advent of our Lord, and the ancestry of Christ. In the choir the subjects were from the New Testament. All had their significations written upon them like tapestries in Greek and Latin. They had been largely effaced by the Turks and the lapse of time. Against the western gable within was yet to be seen the vestiges of a tree of Jesse, also made in mosaic ; the pavement was of marble of divers colours, and the walls were covered with slabs or tables of white marble like those in the Cave of the Nativity, but the most part had been removed by the Turks. The roof was of cedar and cypress.[1]

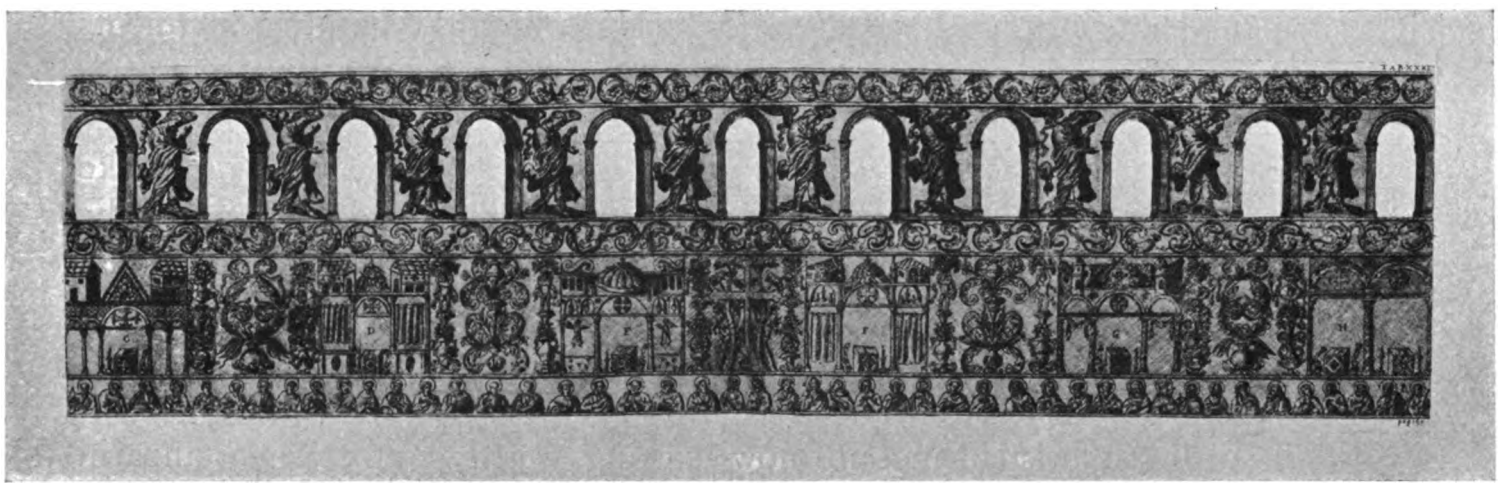

FIG. 22.—CIAMPINI'S VIEW OF THE MOSAICS ON NORTH SIDE OF NAVE.

The subjects of the mosaics so far as they existed in 1626 were carefully described by Quaresmius,[2] and Ciampini[3] engraved a complete and restored view of the compositions on the north side of the nave (Fig. 22). In the broad space between the beams over the columns and the clerestory windows were fine decorative compositions of architecture containing inscriptions relating to the great Councils of the Church. At the middle of the north side was a beautiful cross set against trees, of which a fragment still remaining is shown in Fig. 24. Poor as Ciampini's engraving is, it is of value in showing the scheme in its entirety. Above, between the windows, were large single figures of angels worshipping towards the star in the east.[4]

In the eastern part of the church the Annunciation was figured on the central apse and the Nativity on that to the south, while on that to the north was probably the Resurrection. On the walls above the colonnades were scenes from the Gospels, and still higher were ranged figures of saints and prophets, that is, I suppose, between the windows, corresponding to the angels in the

[1] The account of G. Sandys is practically a translation from Zuallardo.
[2] Quaresmius, *terræ Sanctæ Elucidatio*, see also note 3, page 31.
[3] J. Ciampini, *De Sacris Aedificiis a Constantino magno constructis*, Rome, 1693. Plate XXXIII, between pages 150 and 151.
[4] In de Vogüé's illustration they are shown facing the door.

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nave. It must be to these last that Felix Fabri refers when he says that the Old Testament was on one side of the church and the New on the other. The existing mosaics are fully described below. When they were fresh and splendid they were famous all over the East. An Arabic writer, *c.* 1200, tells of a church in Egypt having pictures of glass mosaic, some coloured and some gold, and "skilfully executed as at Bethlehem."[1]

The photographs show that mother-of-pearl is very largely made use of in enriching the mosaic with little points of light, squares, spots, and drops. Paul Durand studied the mosaics in 1864, and a few slight notes of his have been preserved. The mosaics of the Transfiguration and the Entry into Jerusalem in the south transept are, he says, poor work, but the fragments of the Ascension and of the Incredulity of St. Thomas are very beautiful, the heads and gestures "superb."

We have seen (p. 16) that already in the sixth century St. Ætheria[2] spoke of the decorations of gold, mosaic, and precious marbles, and it need not be doubted that such decorations were original. According to Eusebius the great church in Jerusalem was lined with slabs of marble, and the method of fixing the marble slabs in the narthex at Bethlehem as described by Mr. Harvey is like the method seen in the ruins of Rome.

The earliest Christian mosaics now existing are those at Sta. Costanza in Rome, *c.* 350. But it has been shown that the mosaics on the triumphal arch at St. Peter's represented Constantine dedicating the church, and were wrought in his reign.[3] That there were earlier mosaics at Bethlehem than those now existing is made known to us by Eutychius,[4] who wrote in the tenth century that the Caliph Omar, after the Mohammedan conquest of Palestine, went to Bethlehem and prayed within the church at the south arch (i.e. toward Mecca), and "all this arch (apse ?) was adorned with mosaic work, but in these days the Mohammedans have taken away the mosaic work on the arch." From this and another similar passage it seems probable that the south transept became for a time a mosque.

On the marble columns of the interior are painted tall figures of Christ, the Virgin, and Saints. Those in the choir have been repainted at no remote period; those in the nave are much faded and injured, but they are of fine quality, and de Vogüé seems to have considered that they were contemporary with the mosaics. They were studied in detail in 1864 by Paul Durand,[5] a high authority. According to him they are of fine style and of a good period. Their features and hands are delicate and well made, the drapery

[1] Evetts and Butler, *Churches, etc., of Egypt.*
[2] See chapter iv, page 56, VIII.
[3] Frothingham's *Monuments of Christian Rome*, 1909.
[4] See chapter iv, page 58, XIII.
[5] *Bulletin Monumental*, 1884.

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supple and understood. They were painted on deep red grounds. The Virgin enthroned with the Holy Child had a blue robe and purple mantle. On another pillar was St. Anna in white and yellow, with the Virgin in a beautiful blue. The head of a bishop which was well preserved was, Durand says, " superb." Another figure of the Virgin had a little personage kneeling beneath with a shield, and Durand suggests that they were painted for various travellers. Many of the inscriptions are in duplicate Latin and Greek, and several of the figures represent Western saints. Two warriors, each bearing lance and shield, were St. Canute, King of the Danes, and St. [Olaf] King of Norway ; and these, Durand thought, belonged to the twelfth century, the lettering being of that time ; and it is difficult to think of these northern saints being represented much later.

On the comparatively poor iconostasis are, or were, several paintings which Durand thought ancient and good. Scratched on the marble pillars here and there are many *Graffiti* by Western pilgrims, some of which are given in the memoirs of the Palestine Survey (see also Fig. 12). Felix Fabri relates how travellers were sworn not to draw their arms in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The square area at the crossing of the church is built exactly over the Cave of the Nativity, and this part of the church, together with the presbytery, is some feet above the level of the nave. It seems probable that when the church was erected above the sacred cave the upper surface of the rock was allowed to project in the middle of the floor as a visible central point, around and above which the sheltering church was built. The rock foundation of the ancient temple altar in Jerusalem thus protrudes through the floor of the dome of the rock to-day. The rock of the Holy Sepulchre thus rises at the centre of the church built over it by Constantine. Constantine's church at Mamre was built around the stump of Abraham's Oak, and the " footprints " in the rock were shown in the midst of the Church of the Ascension.

Not far from Bethlehem the traveller Arculph saw the tomb of David, " in the middle of a church," and Jacob's Well was at the centre of another cruciform church. Of Bethlehem, Willibald[1] says, " Where our Lord was born over that now stands the altar." This suggests, perhaps, that there was some shaft beneath the altar through which the cave might be seen. He says further, " It was formerly a subterranean cave, now a quadrangular house cut in the rock, and the earth has been dug out on all sides and thrown away." Arculph describes it as a sort of natural cave, and doubtless there was a natural passage in the rock, the irregularities of which have been enlarged into chambers. A parallel on a much larger scale is furnished by the rock dwellings described

[1] See chapter iv, page 60, xv.

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with plans in Schumacher's *Across the Jordan* (p. 136), which are still used for sheltering cattle, and contain mangers and cisterns.[1]

The caves at Bethlehem are for the most part trimmed up with masonry to approximately straight-sided forms, and St. Jerome's chapel has lately been entirely remodelled. The Grotto of the Nativity is lined with whitish marble, now much begrimed with smoke, and almost entirely covered with drapery.

Several other caves than those usually described exist under the nave of the church. Mr. Harvey says—

> "A series are entered from the garden to the south of the church, and run north with a branch to the west, and are roofed by the natural rock strengthened by masonry arches. Just east of the entrance and outside the church is another cave in the rock in which bones have been stacked. Nobody seems to know anything about these grottoes."

Three smaller features in the church remain to be mentioned. The font (see Fig. 11) is octagonal outside, while the basin is a quatrefoil, that is, a cross with rounded ends, a common form for early font basins in the East. Leclercq points out that the inscription formula resembles another inscription found in Cilicia, and permits of the attribution of the font to the period before the Arab conquest. "It seems to belong to the first Christian centuries." The classical form of the panel which contains the inscription bears out this conclusion.

The carved doors between the narthex and the nave are in their upper parts mediaeval, and covered with delicately carved arabesque patterns, on which, in the top panels, are projecting crosses (Fig. 3, page 4).

There are bronze gates at the top of the steps leading to the grotto; they are cast in perforated work, with crosses in circles (see Fig. 23, after Gailhabaud, *L'Architecture du Ve au XVIIe Siècle et les Arts qui en dépendent*, vol. ii.).[2]

The exterior of the church when first completed must have been remarkable for its extreme austerity. Except for the cornices to the doors, and narrow capping courses to the apses and narthex, not a single moulding exists, nor is there any

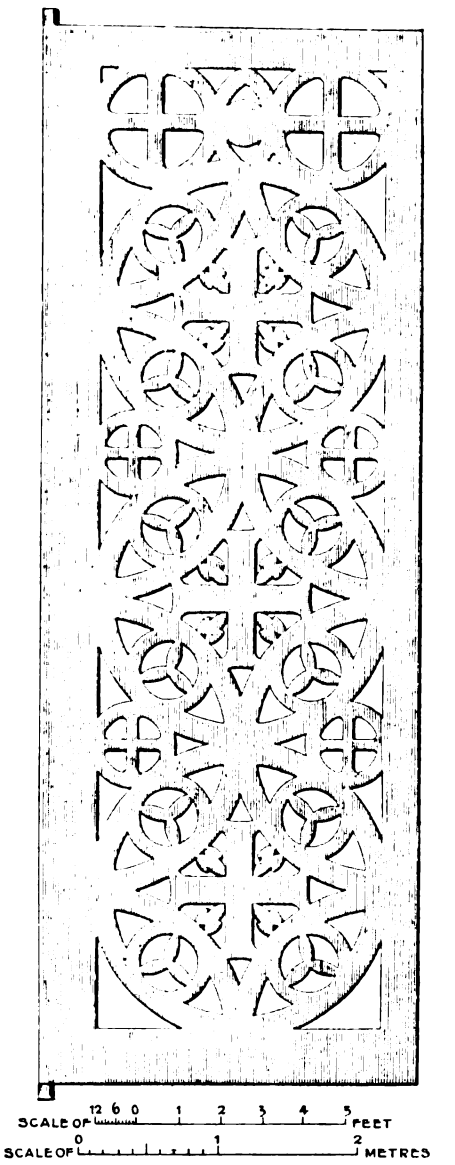

FIG. 23.—BRONZE GATES.
(*From Gailhabaud.*)

[1] "It is perfectly true that the many grottoes and caves which are found among the rocks of Judea were used for the reception of cattle. I have myself seen grottoes appropriated to this purpose."—*Eöthen.*

[2] The pattern of these gates seems to be of the thirteenth century; it is like one on the mosaic shrine at Westminster.

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carving. The interior, however, is graceful, well lighted, and stately, and we can imagine the feeling of exaltation and expansion which must have been felt on passing within its walls. "Not devotion nor awe, but grandeur is the first impression as the eye runs down a quadruple row of stately Corinthian columns."[1] The church is now, of course, only a wreck of what it once was, but that which remains is authentic, and a sufficient index to its past beauties. It was nobly planned on the large quiet lines of classic art, and splendidly adorned by a complete scheme of late Byzantine mosaics, gorgeous and glittering, and yet "severe as the gravity of holy things."

* * * * * *

The Church at Bethlehem is to be classed rather as Early Christian than as Byzantine. That is, the architectural elements are late Roman, modified by being adapted to a new purpose. This later Roman style, in the eastern provinces especially, already had germs of what were to develop into Byzantine characteristics, but this is so in regard to details and in "feeling" rather than in new structural methods. The style of stone masonry in which it is built is that of Syria, and there are certain resemblances to the later monastic churches of Egypt and to that of Sinai. An almost exactly similar capital to those of the interior of the Church of the Nativity has been found at Ahnas in Egypt;[2] this also had a cross on its abacus. The schools of Roman–Christian art of Egypt and Syria seem to have had much in common, and it is to them—perhaps especially in Egypt—that we should look for so much of the new thought which was to transform Roman art into Byzantine art. Strzygowski, in a series of brilliant essays, has argued for the Oriental basis of the newer art to the exclusion of Rome. But a distinction will, I am confident, have to be made between the spirit and the body, between the structural and ornamental elements of the newer style. Much that has been argued as to the non-Roman origin of Byzantine *building forms* will have to be given up, and a part of Rivoira's claims for Rome and Italy will have to be conceded, although he seems to exaggerate in making too much of the metropolis and the home country to the neglect of the Hellenistic cities of the East. There are two great difficulties in the way of any clear statement of Byzantine origins—the tendency to identify Rome the empire with Rome the city, and the difficulty of separating the expressional content of the newer art from its structural means. The triapsidal plan of our church, for instance, Strzygowski would refer to some far-off Eastern prototype, remote in time as in place, but his only substantial argument is based on the form of the central hall in the palace of Mshatta in Moab,

[1] *Ecclesiologist*, 1847.
[2] See J. G. Milne, *Hist. of Egypt under Roman Rule*. (Fig. 81.)

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which he attempts to date in the fourth or fifth century A.D.[1] As a matter of fact the date of Mshatta seems more likely to be of the sixth century at earliest, while the triconch is found in the Roman palace of Treves.[2] The date of Mshatta is of further interest to us as Strzygowski has pointed out the resemblance between the curious tree-like forms found in the mosaic decorations of the Church of the Nativity and others found sculptured on the façade of Mshatta (see p. 35). Now Mshatta, as a whole, has a close resemblance to the recently-discovered Castle of Wardan, in Syria, which is certainly dated as having been built by Justinian in the sixth century. The type of design of the richly-carved façade of Mshatta seems related to the Egypto-Syrian school of the sixth century, with some Persian mixture. These Persian elements themselves seem to belong to the sixth or seventh century. For instance, one very characteristic feature is a curious griffin with a peacock's tail ; now this monster is so frequently found figured in Sassanian stuffs and silver-work[3] of the seventh century that it would seem to be an indication of that epoch.

W. R. L.

[1] Some account of this type of plan, embodying Strzygowski's views, is given in Sir Wm. Ramsay's and Miss Bell's *Thousand and One Churches*.

[2] For recent opinions on this subject see Bull. Mon. 1909; and for this and the date of Mshatta, Diehl's new *Manuel d'Art byzantin*, 1910.

[3] See two textiles at S. Kensington, and J. Smirnov's recent volume on Persian silver objects in the Hermitage Museum.

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Chapter III

THE SURVIVING MOSAICS

The Church of the Nativity was ornamented with mosaics from the century of its foundation, and whatever may have been the nature of its original adornment, the restoration of the twelfth century resulted in an elaborate scheme comparable to that of the "illuminated" churches of Greece or Sicily.[1] The story of the soldiers of Chosroes (p. 20) points to the existence of an external mosaic, including the Adoration of the Magi, upon the west front, a composition which is thought to have inspired ivory-carvings and other portable works of art in the sixth century.[2] We have now to describe the surviving fragments in detail, and examine the evidence which bears upon their date, acknowledging a debt of gratitude in the first place to Quaresmius,[3] and in the second to the Marquis de Vogüé,[4] whose labours render a lengthy description in the present place superfluous. It has already been stated that the surviving mosaics in the nave include considerable sections of the "Councils" on both walls, three angels, near one of which is an artist's name (see below), and seven busts of the ancestors of Christ. Four subjects from the New Testament remain in the transepts (Plate 11), two almost complete (the Entry into Jerusalem[5] and the Incredulity of Thomas), two frag-

[1] See pp. 24 ff., and note especially the evidence of St. Ætheria (p. 56), the abbot Daniel (p. 62), and John Phocas (p. 65).

[2] C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale*, ii, 139; J. Strzygowski, *Hellenistische und Koptische Kunst*, p. 92; *Vizantieski Vremennik* iv, 1897, p. 91; *Proc. Soc. Biblical Archaeology*, 1904, p. 212.

[3] *Terrae Sanctae Elucidatio*, vol. ii: hereafter described as Q. From this work we derive the first detailed account of the mosaics in the church. Though considerably damaged in his time, they still for the most part long occupied their original positions. Cf. the testimony of Felix Fabri (pp. 67–9), Pietro Casola (p. 70), Marino Saluto (p. 61), Sir R. Guylforde (p. 24), etc. The most serious dilapidation appears to have ensued in the course of the seventeenth century. The account of Ciampini, *De Sacris Aedificiis*, Rome, 1793, pp. 150 ff., is largely based upon Quaresmius, but he published an interesting plate (Fig. 22) from a drawing made for him by Father Bernard, Commissary and Procurator-General of the Franciscans in the Holy Land.

[4] *Les Eglises de la Terre Sainte*, Paris, 1860, pp. 64 ff. In all notes and references described as V. Shorter notices of the Mosaics will be found in M. G. Millet's chapter on Byzantine Art in A. Michel's *Histoire de l'art depuis les premiers temps chrétiens*, etc., I, p. 166, 1905, and Ch. Diehl, *Manuel d'Art byzantin*, p. 527, 1910. The account by M. Germer-Durand in *Echos de Notre-Dame de France*, to which M. Diehl alludes, is inaccessible to me.

[5] V., Pl. v.

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mentary (the Ascension and the Transfiguration) (Fig. 29). The list ends with an important bilingual inscription from the eastern apse, now above the architrave just east of the south-east crossing-pier (Fig. 27); and a fine piece of interlaced design occupying a corresponding position opposite (Fig. 25).

The mosaics have not been reproduced for fifty years, and the illustrations in de Vogüé's work, valuable as they have proved, hardly satisfy modern requirements. Photographs of a quality justifying reproduction are difficult if not impossible to obtain[1]: a photographer from Jerusalem took all the fragments on behalf of the Fund, but the results were unsatisfactory, and may be judged from Plate 12 and Fig. 28, which reproduce the clearest of the prints. We must therefore still rely upon the work of the skilled draughtsman, and Mr. Harvey's description of his methods, here quoted in full, will show that no pains were spared by him to secure the utmost possible accuracy under very unfavourable conditions.

"The drawings of the mosaics were made entirely on the spot in the church, to a scale of approximately one inch to the foot. Extreme care was taken to render them accurate, every letter recorded in the inscriptions having been checked by means of powerful opera-glasses from many different standpoints on the church floor, and upon a high step-ladder in the middle of the nave. Although the touching or cleaning of the mosaics with inscriptions was rigidly forbidden, the two fragments in the north and south transepts were brushed down and washed to a considerable extent, and the colours of the tesserae in their lower parts carefully examined from the top of a ladder immediately below the pictures. Unfortunately the strain of looking through opera-glasses at the inscriptions and colours of the mosaics made it impossible to execute the drawings with the refinement of line and colour which might have been possible under more favourable conditions. The colours had to be determined by reference to those in the comparatively small portions accessible for adequate cleansing and thorough investigation; and having been put on paper in the gloom of a church interior in wintry weather, fail to do justice to the beauty of the original tints, which, though gorgeous and rich in the extreme, are delightfully blended in the pattern-work to produce a lavish but perfectly harmonious effect. No attempt has been made in the drawings to show the actual position or number of the tesserae themselves, the condition of the pictures and the smallness of scale in the drawings combining with the darkness of the church to make this desirable end practically impossible. The dust which lies thickly upon the surface of the mosaics in the nave made it difficult to ascertain the colouring of the whole with absolute certainty, but many parts were sufficiently clear to give the key to the colours used in the general scheme. Gold, silver, and mother-of-pearl were all visible with tolerable distinctness, and are indicated in the drawings in their proper positions; silver paint has been used for the two last-mentioned colours, as in the originals they have almost identically the same appearance, the mother-of-pearl being used for the larger round or pear-shaped spots; and the silvered glass for the backgrounds to the lettering of inscriptions in the south wall of the nave, and for outlines to foliage or high lights in the robes of certain figures."

Mr. Harvey found no proof of any systematic restoration. The only additions which he could detect, take the form of lines roughly painted where

[1] Dr. Baumstark took photographs, but he also notes the difficulty of obtaining good results. The light is often bad, and the dust obscures the outline of the subjects (*Römische Quartalschrift*, 1906, p. 146).

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patches of plaster have been added to join up broken edges; and these are so badly executed as to be immediately obvious. All that remains of the mosaic must therefore be regarded as original work, unmodified by any late restorer's hand. "The fragments are uninjured in themselves, and remain to all appearance in their original state. Restoration does not seem to have been attempted and could only be attempted even now if the work were authorized by the Turkish Government and the artist surrounded by Turkish soldiers to protect him from the fanatic rivalry of the sacristans." Here and there a little whitewash has been smeared over the inscriptions, notably in the scene of the Incredulity of St. Thomas, but the forms of letters can be divined beneath it in a favourable light (see below, p. 46). The material of which the tesserae are made is for the most part glass; but cubes of limestone and squares of mother-of-pearl[1] are used for the purposes above indicated. The background is of gold cubes, manufactured in the usual manner, a sheet of gold foil fixed to one surface of the cube being protected by an overlying film of transparent glass. The silvered cubes are made in the same manner.[2] The principal colours used in the designs are various shades of green, red, and blue, the two former hues greatly predominating in the nave, dark blue being more conspicuous in the work of the north transept.

The average breadth of the tesserae is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch; but in depicting faces and hands the artists sometimes employed smaller cubes of about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch square.

THE NAVE

Along each side, just above the architrave, was the long series of busts representing the ancestors of Christ (cf. Plate 11);[3] above these, and below the windows, was a much broader zone, consisting of conventionally represented churches (north side) or architectural Tables (south side), all framing inscriptions relating to the General or Provincial Councils, the latter being upon the north wall, the former upon the south. Each church, or pair of Tables, was divided from the next by bold conventional ornament, the centre of the north wall being occupied by a beautiful cross amid foliage (Fig. 24). The broad zone containing the Councils was enclosed at the top by a narrow border of acanthus-scroll immediately beneath the windows, the spaces

[1] This substance is used in the upper and later mosaics of the Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock) at Jerusalem (eleventh century), and in the twelfth century mosaics of the Mosque El Aksa, on which see below, and de Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, pp. 87, 102.

[2] Silvered tesserae are used with good effect in El Aksa, on the ornament of which see below, p. 35, and de Vogüé, p. 102. They are also found in earlier works, for example, in Eski Djouma, Salonica, and St. Irene, Constantinople.

[3] Series of busts in medallions are a frequent feature in early as well as late mosaics. We may also remember the painted medallions with busts of the popes which decorated the sides of the nave in the basilica of S. Paolo fuori le murà at Rome.

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between which were filled by figures of angels proceeding towards the east end of the building.[1] By one of these figures is the name of an artist *Basilius* (Plate 10) in Roman characters.[2] Above the windows and the angels' heads, ran a second acanthus-border similar in character to the first. Of all this decoration there now remain on the north side only six angels, two complete churches with a fragment of a third, and a part of the central cross; on the south side, two of the double Tables and fragments of two others, with seven busts of our Lord's ancestors below them. Everything else, including the whole of the Tree of Jesse, on the west wall, has disappeared.

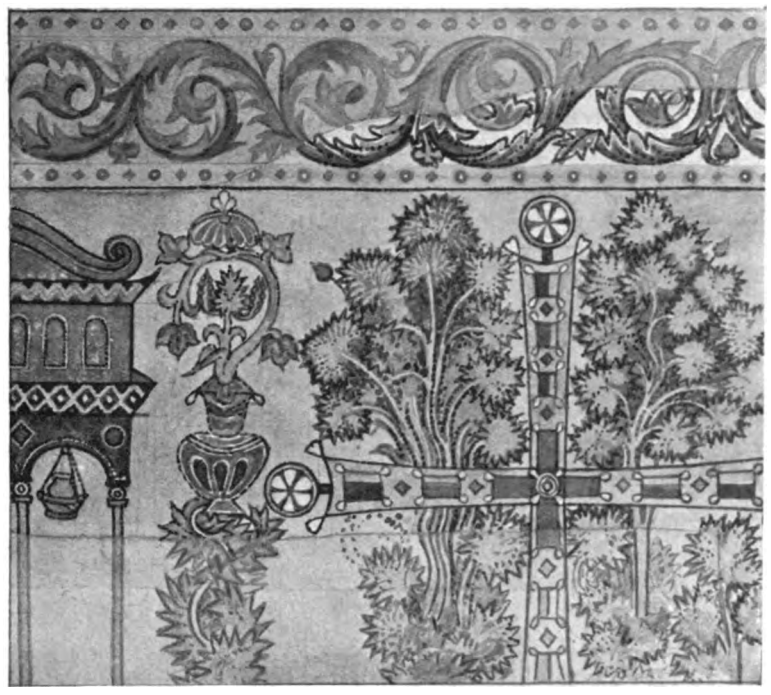

FIG. 24.—PORTION OF MOSAIC CROSS ON NORTH WALL OF NAVE UNDER SIXTH WINDOW.
Scale 1-25.

When the decoration of the nave was complete, the Councils on the north wall,[3] beginning from the east, were as follows: Ancyra, Antioch, Sardica, Gangrae, Laodicea, Carthage. Of these, as will be seen from Plate 10, two (Antioch and Sardica) are still complete, while a fragment of a third (Gangrae) survives.

On the south wall, also beginning from the east, were the First Council of Nicaea, the First of Constantinople, those of Ephesus and Chalcedon, the Second of Constantinople, the Third of Constantinople, and the Second of Nicaea. These are the seven Oecumenical Councils.

Of the first of these only a fragment now exists; the First Council of Constantinople is complete; Ephesus survives only in part; Chalcedon is complete; the Second of Constantinople is entirely lost, while the Third is represented by considerable fragments. The Second Council of Nicaea, which was unique in being inscribed in Latin, is altogether destroyed.

In all cases the formula of the inscription is much the same. The first part states the title of the Council, the number of those attending it, and the

[1] Somewhat after the manner of the martyrs in the Church of St. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna.
[2] Cf. Durand's sketch, *Bulletin Monumental*, Caen, 1884, p. 360.
[3] The general position of the mosaic fragments on the north wall is well shown in the view of the interior of the church, given by Kondakoff, *Archaeological Voyage in Syria and Palestine*, pl. liv, St. Petersburg, 1904, and in the photograph in the series forming the Architectural Index in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

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problem for the discussion of which it was convened ; the second part formulates the decision at which it arrived. The Council of Constantinople here reproduced (Plate 11) may be taken as typical of all. The inscriptions of all the Councils are given by Quaresmius and de Vogüé : in the present volume only those represented by actual remains will be transcribed at length (see below, p. 39). It has been observed that the method of representing the Councils by inscriptions recording their decrees is unusual ; as a rule the bishops attending them are depicted in a group which sometimes includes the heretics condemned.[1]

The purely ornamental motives in the nave recall those of other mosaics in the Holy Land executed by Greeks for foreign princes. The resemblances are most marked in the case of those of the Mosque of El Aksa at Jerusalem, the mosaics of which were executed for Saladin by Byzantine artists in A.D. 1187.[2] There are also analogies to the mosaics in the Mosque of Omar, both those of the lower walls, and those of the dome, completed in A.D. 1027.[3] In all these cases we find the fantastic plant- or tree-design built up of heterogeneous elements foreign to natural vegetation ; in all, there are the pairs of wings, of which the origin is discussed below. It is clear that the mosaicists introduced into their decorative scheme motives not generally employed in middle-Byzantine art, motives which we do not find for example at Daphni or at St. Luke of Stiris. The home of this strange vegetation is to be sought not in Constantinople, Greece, or Egypt, but in Mesopotamia and Persia, where it had been employed for several centuries. It was perhaps adopted by the Greeks working for the first Mohammedan princes because its luxuriance adapted it for covering considerable spaces with effect at a time when figure subjects were forbidden, and for this reason we may suppose it to have been favoured by the first decorators of the Mosque of Omar. It was combined with vine-scrolls of the kind familiar to students of Early Christian art, and may have acquired so strong a foothold in the Holy Land that later artists naturally incorporated it in their designs. This style of ornament, of which the elements occur upon the sculptured façade of the Mshatta, has been so well analysed by Strzygowski[4] that it is unnecessary in the present place to do more than indicate its principal characteristics. The ground-idea is that of trees, often rising from vases, and filling intervening

[1] So in frescoes on Mount Athos ; cf. also the miniature in the Menologium of Basil II in the Vatican (f. 108).

[2] De Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, 1864, p. 99, and pl. xxxiii.

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 83 ff. and pl. xx–xxiii. Cf. also Clermont-Ganneau, *Archaeological Researches in Palestine* i, p. 190, and Baumstark in *Römische Quartalschrift*, 1906, p. 143. The motives even of the latest mosaics in the Dome of the Rock are based upon traditional designs of earlier date.

[4] *Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xxv, 1904, pp. 258 ff. It will be remembered that the architect of Mshatta is held to have come from Mesopotamia. For the divergency of opinion as to the date of this building, see above, p. 30.

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spaces with divergent foliage. But in process of time the "tree" loses its natural character; its stem and branches are composed of colonnettes, fictile vessels, wings, and outgrowths of a fantastic character; sometimes, as in the Mosque of Omar, gems and jewellery are added to enhance the effect. The procedure recalls Cellini's remark upon the grotesques of the Renaissance: "As the ancients delighted in the composition of chimerical creatures, and gave to the supposed promiscuous breed of animals the name of monsters, in like manner did artists produce monsters by their foliage."

The "wings" visible in Plate 10, and also occurring on the Mshatta façade,[1] are not connected, as de Vogüé thought, with angelic wings,[2] but with the Sassanian emblem of sovereignty. The eagle's wings as seen on the head-dresses of Persian monarchs are the real source of the motive, which passed into conventional decorative design, and is well instanced by the "winged-candelabra" of Mshatta.[3] It may be added that the ornamental borders of the ivory covers of the Psalter of Queen Melisenda (see below), themselves probably made in Jerusalem a generation before the Bethlehem mosaics, have points in common with this oriental ornamentation, and in places suggest a relationship to Armenian art.[4] A connexion with Armenia is also possible in the case of our mosaics: an indication may perhaps be found in the fine piece of interlacing in the Bema (Fig. 25), which, as an isolated piece of ornament, may be mentioned here rather out of its place.[5] Interlacing of varied kinds was a popular feature in Armenian design at a much earlier time than the twelfth century, and the later illuminated MSS. are seldom without numerous examples. It is of interest to recall that the connexion of the Armenians with the Church is historically attested, and the old wooden door bore an inscription mentioning an Armenian prince of the thirteenth century.[6]

The conventional representations of churches on the north wall suggest a type with a central dome and cupolas at the corners. The plan is reminiscent of the mid-Byzantine period rather than of the earlier centuries of our era; and the bulbous form of the cupolas on the church of Antioch is again a late feature, recurring in the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem in

[1] *Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xxv, 1904, p. 320.
[2] *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, p. 87.
[3] Strzygowski quotes examples of the motive on Mohammedan woodwork in the Cairo Museum.
[4] British Museum, *Catalogue of Ivory Carvings*, 1909, No. 28, pl. xv, xvi. The Armenians were probably important agents in the transmission of oriental decorative designs to Byzantine art. The arabesque based on the vine, so ubiquitous in Byzantine illuminated MSS. of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, may have originally been introduced by them.
[5] The colours of this interlacing band are red, blue and green on a gold ground. In the reproduction, the red shows lightest and the blue darkest, the intermediate being green. The depth of the band, between the enclosing top and bottom lines, measures about eighteen inches.
[6] See page 4; also *Ecclesiologist* vii, 1847, p. 97; de Vogüé, p. 113. Armenian artists were active in various parts of the Christian world. An inscription at the White Monastery, Sohag, shows that Armenian painters were at work there at the end of the eleventh century (Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie Chrétienne*, article *Baouît*, col. 209).

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the transept (Plate 11). The altars, with their ornate coverings and jewelled books, perhaps recall the custom of placing the book of the Gospels in the midst of the delegates on the occasion of Ecclesiastical Councils. The whole arrangement, however, has a general resemblance to that seen in the architectural zones of ornament in the domes of St. George at Salonica and of the Catholic baptistery at Ravenna, and these in their turn may depend upon

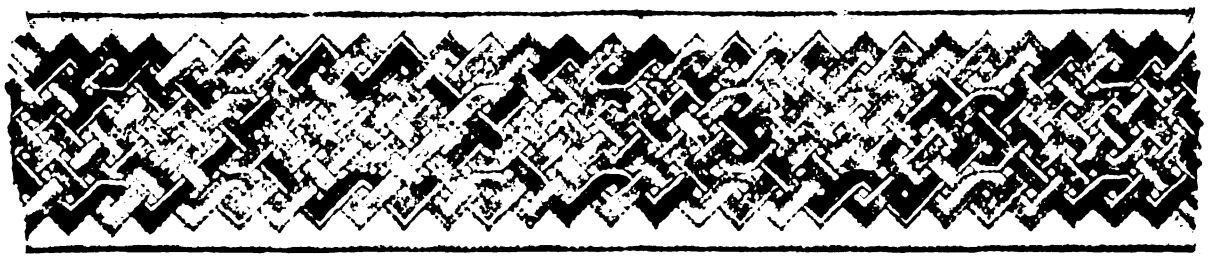

FIG. 25.—REMAINS OF MOSAIC BAND. Scale 1–15.

Alexandrian prototypes. The curious accessories—candelabra, chalices, crosses with double traverse, flagons—visible in the elevation of the Church of Sardica, may be intended rather to indicate in a general way the wealth and contents of the sacristy than to represent the actual position of treasure-chambers. In connexion with the accessories in the baptistery at Ravenna, Riedin quotes a statement by Bishop Sophronius of Jerusalem, that sacred objects were exposed to veneration in the upper part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ;[1] but on the whole this explanation does not seem required to meet the present case. The censers (Plate 11) are of the uncovered Byzantine type ; the embroidered altar-coverings and woven hangings perhaps suggest actual designs.[2] The decorative columns of the Tables with inscriptions are of the fanciful types familiar to us in the Eusebian Canons of illuminated MSS. The bands of foliate design running along the sides of the nave above and below the windows have affinities with ornament of earlier date, and the narrow jewelled borders enclosing them in like manner recall features in earlier mosaics. But the scrolls are really treated in a closer manner than that of the early-Christian period, and the jewelled borders are not so near to the type occurring in sixth-century mosaics, as is that of the Entry into Jerusalem (Plate 11).[3] The more natural foliage of the trees behind the jewelled cross in the middle of the north wall of the nave (Fig. 24) is a feature of interest. Trees are also realistically treated in the mosaics

[1] *Proceedings of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society*, ix, 1897, pp. 74 ff. The reference is to the *Anacreontica* of Sophronius, xx, 47–50 (Migne, *Patrology*, Greek Series, vol. 87, 3821).

[2] The lozenge-diaper on the curtains of the Church of Sardica recalls certain early textiles in which Strzygowski sees an oriental influence (*Jahrbuch der Königlichen preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xxiv, 1903, p. 170).

[3] For this type of jewelled border, very common at Ravenna, see J. Kurth, *Wandmosaïken von Ravenna*, p. 122 ; H. Dütschke, *Ravennatische Studien*, 1909, p. 249.

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of the Mosque of El Aksa.[1] The jewelled cross itself is common in Byzantine decorative art, discs or rosettes at the ends of the arms being frequent in the middle period. The general form is thought to have been derived from that of the great cross set up by Constantine upon the site of Golgotha. It made its appearance early in Christian art, perhaps through the agency of returning pilgrims[2]: it is seen, for example, on the ampullae at Monza and in the apse-mosaic of Santa Pudenziana at Rome.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Mediaeval Greek palaeography has made so little progress since de Vogüé described the Bethlehem inscriptions, that little need be added to his remarks on their character and date. The form of the letters, the abbreviations, and the ligatures are such as we might expect to occur in the twelfth century; they find their parallels in the dated inscription of the choir. It has been already remarked that the Latin lettering in the nave is of the same period: the style of the fragmentary hexameters is equally characteristic of the time. If then the Greek inscriptions of the nave reproduce others of an earlier date, they are free reproductions and not careful copies. They have all been published by de Vogüé, who examined those which survived with M. Guiraud, and gives for those which are lost the versions of Quaresmius, with a few corrections of his own. It will therefore be superfluous in the present volume to do more than furnish a text and translation of the surviving inscriptions here reproduced (Plates 10 and 11, and Fig. 27). In the main the versions differ but little from those of de Vogüé, but occasionally there are slight divergences, in some of which the reading of Quaresmius is upheld. It will be well before treating of the inscriptions themselves to explain the method by which the present readings were obtained.

Mr. Harvey was fortunate enough to obtain the collaboration of Mr. Martin Sprengling, of the American School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, who most kindly devoted much time to this work. In Mr. Harvey's words, he "spent ten days staring at the mosaics with good glasses, either from the top of a high step-ladder or from the floor, frequently searching about all over the church for a good focussing-ground from which to examine a single letter." When Mr. Harvey's eyes began to feel the effect of continual strain after the completion of the inscriptions on the north side of the nave, Mr. Sprengling himself pencilled in those on the south side. "As he wrote them," con-

[1] De Vogüé, *Temple de Jérusalem*, p. 101.

[2] D. Ainaloff, *Hellenistic Base of Byzantine Art*, pp. 52 and 182, and O. Wulff's review, *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xxv, p. 52; O. Schönewolf, *Die Darstellung der Auferstehung Christi*, p. 32; H. Grisar, *Civiltà Cattolica*, iii, 722 ff., and *Analecta Romana*, i, 564 ff.

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tinues Mr. Harvey, "I frequently verified difficult letters, etc., and we afterwards spent two days on the ladder, both armed with excellent glasses, merely checking the things letter by letter." [1] The subscribers to the Fund will be sincerely grateful to Mr. Sprengling for this friendly assistance.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE FRAGMENTS ON THE NORTH WALL OF NAVE

Beginning from the east.

Η ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑ. [2]

Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC Η ΕΝ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΕΙΑ ΤΗC CΥΡΙΑC [3] ΤΩΝ ΛΓ ΕΠΙCΚΟΠΩΝ ΠΡΟ ΤΗC [4] ΕΝ ΝΙΚΑ [5] ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΗΚΗC [6] CΥΝΟΔΟΥ ΓΕΓΟΝΕΝ [7] ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ .CΑΜΟCΑΤΕΩC, ΨΗΛΟΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΝ [8] ΤΟΝ ΧΡΙCΤΟΝ [9] ΔΟΓΜΑΤΙCΑΝΤΟC. ΤΟΥΤΟΝ Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC ΩC ΚΑΚΩC ΦΡ(ΟΝΗ)CΑΝΤΑ ΑΠΕΒ(ΑΛΛΕΤΟ)

"The Holy Synod of the thirty-three bishops at Antioch in Syria before the Œcumenical Synod in Nicaea, was held against Paul of Samosata, who proclaimed that Christ was merely a man. Him the Holy Synod cast out as a heretic."

The Council here in question is the Second of Antioch in A.D. 272, at which Paul of Samosata was deposed from his bishopric.

The version given above is that of Messrs. Harvey and Sprengling; only the letters within brackets are supplied from Quaresmius, having evidently been destroyed since the sixteenth century.

Throughout the present version ordinary Greek type is used: the abbreviations and late forms of letters actually occurring on the walls, as well as the division of the lines, can be studied in the plates and figures. In the notes, Q. stands for Quaresmius, V. for de Vogüé, H. for Harvey and Sprengling.

[1] The fact that one of the two observers (Mr. Harvey) knows no Greek, while the other is a Greek scholar, is in favour of accuracy in the reproduction. It was impossible for Mr. Harvey to imagine anything; he simply transcribed what he actually saw.

[2] Q., p. 649; V., p. 76.

[3] Q. omits the ι in Συρίας.

[4] Q. omits the ῆ in τῆς.

[5] H. has Νίσᾳ; it is possible that ς may really be the form of the third letter, but I have ventured to substitute κ.

[6] Οἰκουμενικῆς, V.; Οἰκουμενκης, Q.

[7] γέγωνεν, V.

[8] H. has the abbreviated form $\overline{\text{ANON}}$.

[9] $\overline{\text{XN}}$, H.

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CAPΔIKH[1]

Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC Η ΕΝ CΑΡΔΙΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΡΜ̄ ΕΠΙCΚΟΠΩΝ ΓΕΓΟΝΕΝ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥC ΑΓΙΟΥC[2] ΑΘΑΝΑCΙΟΝ ΤΟΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙ(ΑC)[3] ΜΕΛΕΤΙΟΝ[4] ΤΟΝ ΑΝΤΙΟΧΙΑC[5] ΠΑΥΛΟΝ[6] ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΟC ΑΠΟΚΑΤΑCΤΗΝΑΙ[7] ΕΝ ΤΟΙC ΙΔΙΟΙC ΑΥΤΩΝ[8] ΘΡΟΝΟΙC ΗCΑΝ ΓΑΡ[9] ΟΥΤΟΙ[10] (ΥΠΟ ΤΩΝ) ΑΡΙΑΝΩΝ (ΕΞΕΩΘΕΝΤΕC)

"The Holy Synod of forty bishops at Sardica was held to reinstate in their thrones Saints Athanasius of Alexandria, Meletius of Antioch, and Paul of Constantinople; for they had been expelled by the Arians."

The Council of Sardica in Illyria was convened in A.D. 347 by Pope Julius I.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE SOUTH WALL OF THE NAVE

Beginning from the east. Of the first inscription, relating to the Council of Nicaea, only the ends of the lines remain, the missing portions being supplied from Quaresmius.[11]

(ΩΡΙCΕΝ ΔΕ Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥ)ΝΟΔΟC[12] (ΚΑΙ ΩΜΟΛΟΓΗCΕΝ ΤΟΝ)[13] ΜΟΝΟΓ(ΕΝΗ ΥΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΛΟΓΟΝ ΤΟ)Υ ΘΕΟΥ[14] ΔΙ ΟΥ (ΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ C)ΥΝΑΙΔΙΟΝ[15] (ΚΑΙ ΟΜΟΟΥCΙΟΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΤΡ)Ι ΓΕΝΝΗ(ΘΕΝΤΑ ΟΥ ΠΟΙΗΘΕΝ) ΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΝ(ΕΘΕΜΑΤΙCΕΝ ΑΡΕ)ΙΟΝ[16]

"And the Holy Synod decreed and confessed that the only Son and Word of God, by whom all things were made, is coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, begotten and not created. And it anathematised Arius."

The first part of this inscription, on the (completely destroyed) left side of the double Tables, is given by Quaresmius, and need here be only translated.

"The Holy Synod of Nicaea against Arius, who maintained that the Son and Word of God was created, composed of three hundred and eighteen holy fathers, assembled under Constantine the Great."

The date of the Council of Nicaea was A.D. 325.

[1] Q., p. 651; V., p. 76.
[2] Ἀρίους, H.
[3] H. ends with an abbreviation. See plate.
[4] Μελέτιτον, Q.
[5] For the second ι H. has a form resembling a section-mark. See plate.
[6] Q. ends with an abbreviation.
[7] H. uses two ligatures and an abbreviated ending for this word, as does Quaresmius, though the forms of his ligatures, as printed, are somewhat different.
[8] Q. terminates with an abbreviation.
[9] Omitted by Q.
[10] Omitted by Q.
[11] Q., p. 657; V., p. 79.
[12] V. includes the whole of this word.
[13] V. includes this word.
[14] V. treats as missing the ὐ of τοῦ, and the words θεοῦ and δἰ ὁῦ.
[15] V. includes the σ of this word in his text.
[16] V. includes in brackets all that follows συναϊ̈ὸιον, as if nothing of the last three lines remained.

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Next towards the west follows the First Council of Constantinople,[1] the inscriptions relating to which are complete.

Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC Η ΕΝ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΙ ΤΩΝ ΡΝ̄ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΩΝ[2] ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΜΑΧΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΒΛΑCΦΗΜΗCΑΝΤCC ΕΙC ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟΛΙΝΑΡΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΙΠΟΝΤΟC ΜΗ ΕΙΛΗΦΕΝΑΙ ΤΟΝ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ΝΟΥΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΕΙΝΟΝ CΥΝΗΘΡΟΙCΘΙ ΕΠΙ ΘΕΟΔΟCΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ

ΩΡΙCΕΝ[3] ΔΕ Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC ΚΑΙ ΩΜΟΛΟΓΙCΕΝ ΤΟ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ ΤΟ ΕΚ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟC[4] ΕΚΠΟΡΕΥΟΜΕΝΟΝ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΖΩΟΠΟΙΟΝ ΟΜΟΟΥCΙΟΝ[5] ΤΩ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΑΙ ΤΩ ΥΙΩ[6] CΥΝΠΡΟCΚΥΝΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ CΥΝΔΟΞΑΖΟΜΕΝΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΘΕΜΑΤΙCΕΝ[7] ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΟΝ[8] ΕΤΙ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟΛΙΝΑΡΙΟΝ

"The Holy Synod of Constantinople, composed of a hundred and fifty holy fathers, against Macedonius the heretic who blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, and Apollinarius, who said that Christ did not assume a human mind, assembled under Theodosius the Great."

"And the Holy Synod decreed and confessed that the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, supreme and life-giving, is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, and is adored and glorified with them."

The First Council of Constantinople (the second great Œcumenical Council) was held in A.D. 381, and reaffirmed anathemas pronounced in previous councils.

The next inscription towards the west concerns the Council of Ephesus.[9] The first portion is lost, and is here given only in a translation :

"The Holy Synod of Ephesus, composed at first of two hundred holy fathers, against Nestorius who divided Christ into two persons (*ὑποστάσεις*), and refused to the Lord's mother the title of Mother of God (*θεοτόκος*), assembled under Theodosius the younger."

The second portion, which is preserved, is as follows :

ΩΡΙCΕ ΔΕ Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC ΚΑΙ ΩΜΟΛΟΓΙCΕΝ[10] ΤΟΝ ΥΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ΤΟΝ ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗ[11] ΚΑΤΕΛΘΟΝΤΑ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΩΝ CΑΡΚΩΘΕΝΤΑ ΕΚ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟC ΑΓΙΟΥ[12] ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΙΑC ΤΗC[13] ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΑΝΘΡΩΠΗCΕ ΤΙΝ[14] ΚΑΘ ΥΠΟCΤΑCΙΝ[15] ΕΝΩCΙΝ[16] ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΤΕΚΟΥCΑΝ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΘΕΜΑΤΙCΕΝ[17] ΝΕCΤΟΡΙΟΝ

[1] Q., p. 660; V., p. 80.
[2] V. ends the line with this word. In the preceding adjective *o* takes the place of *ω*.
[3] Q. omits the *ν*.
[4] Q. uses the abbreviated form.
[5] Q. omits the second *o* in this word and abbreviates the following diphthong.
[6] Υῳ, Q.
[7] *ἀνεθεμάθισεν*, Q.
[8] Q. omits this and the following two words.
[9] Q., p. 663; V., p. 81.
[10] *ὠμολόγησεν*, Q.
[11] Q. omits the second *o* in this word.
[12] Q. writes ΛΠΑ for ΑΓΙΟΥ.
[13] Q. omits the *τ* of this word.
[14] *τὴν*, V.
[15] The phrase should have been *ἐνανθρωπήσαντα καθ ὑποστατικὴν ἕνωσιν*. The error must be ascribed to the mosaic artist.
[16] Q. gives the *σ* in this word as O.
[17] Q. omits the last *ν*.

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"And the Holy Synod decreed and confessed that the only Son of God descended from Heaven, was incarnate through the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, and was made man in unity of the Substance, and that she who bare Him was the Mother of God ; and it anathematised Nestorius."

The third Œcumenical Council was held at Ephesus in A.D. 431. It originally consisted of two hundred members, but the number was reduced by the withdrawal of thirty Nestorian bishops.

The next inscription, relating to the Council of Chalcedon,[1] is complete.

Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC Η ΕΝ ΧΑΛΚΗΔΟΝΙ ΤΩΝ ΧΛ ΚΑΤΑ ΕΥΤΥΧΟΥC ΚΑΙ ΔΙΟCΚΟΡΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΑΡΝΗCΑΜΕΝΟΝ ΕΙΝΕ ΔΥΟ ΦΥCΕΗC[2] ΕΝ ΤΩ ΧΡΙCΤΩ ΤΗΝ ΤΕ ΘΕΙΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΗΝ CΥΝΗΘΡΟΙCΘΗ ΕΠΙ ΜΑΡΚΙΑΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΥΛΧΕΡΙΑC[3]

ΩΡΙCΕΝ ΔΕ Η[4] ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC ΚΑΙ ΩΜΟΛΟΓΗCΕΝ ΔΥΟ ΦΥCΕΙC ΕΝ ΤΩ ΧΡΙCΤΩ ΘΕΙΑΝ ΤΕ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΗΝ ΕΝ ΜΙΑ ΥΠΟCΤΑCΕΙ ΑCΥΝΧΥΤΩC ΚΑΙ ΑΔΙΑΙΡΕΤΩC ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΘΕΜΑΤΙCΕΝ[5] ΕΥΤΥΧΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΟCΚΟΡΟΝ

"The Holy Synod of Chalcedon, of six hundred and thirty fathers against Eutyches and Dioskoros who denied that there are two natures in Christ, a divine and a human, assembled under Marcian and Pulcheria."

"And the Holy Synod decreed and confessed that there are two natures in Christ, a divine and a human, in one substance without confusion or division, and it anathematised Eutyches and Dioskoros."

This council, convoked by Pope Leo I. at the request of Marcian and Pulcheria, met first at Nicaea and afterwards, in A.D. 451, at Chalcedon to condemn the monophysite heresy.

FIG. 26.—FRAGMENT OF MOSAIC UNDER THIRD WINDOW OF SOUTH WALL OF NAVE.
Scale 1–25.

The next inscription related to the Second Council of Constantinople, convened in A.D. 553 against the Nestorians. It has all disappeared, though extant in the time of Quaresmius.[6]

Following it is that relating to the Third Council of Constantinople, of which only the upper lines in the two Tables remain (Fig. 26).

Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΚΤΗ CΥΝΟΔΟC Η ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΗ ΚΑΤΑ CΕΡΓΙΟΥ ΚΕ ΚΥΡΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΦΡΟΥΗ-CΑΝΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΘΕΛΗΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΙΑΝ Ε(ΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΝ ΕΠΙ ΤΩΝ ΔΥΟ ΟΥCΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙCΤΟΥ, CΥΝΗΘΡΟΙCΘΗ ΕΠΙ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΓΟΝΟΥ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΥ[7]

ΕΒΕΒΑΙΩCΕ ΔΕ Η ΑΓΙΑ CΥΝΟΔΟC ΚΕ ΕΚΥΡΩCΕ ΤΑC ΠΡΟ ΑΥΤΗC, ΟΜΟΛΟΓΗCΑC(Α ΤΑ ΦΥCΙΚΑ ΙΔΙΩΜΑΤΑ ΤΗC ΘΕΟΤΗΤΟC ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΤΗΤΟC ΤΟΥ ΧΡΙCΤΟΥ, Η ΓΟΥΝ ΔΥΟ ΘΕΛΗΜΑΤΑ ΚΕ ΔΥΟ[8] ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑC ΚΕ ΑΝΕΘΕΜΑΤΙCΕ CΕΡΓΙΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΥΡΟΝ)

[1] Q., p. 664; V., p. 82.
[2] *φυσέηθ*, Q., who also has Xo—o for *Χριστῷ*.
[3] There follow the signs shown in the plate, but not given by Q. or V.
[4] *ἰ*, Q. [5] *ἀναθενάτισεν*, Q. [6] Q., p. 668; V., p. 83. [7] *Ἐρακλείον*, V. [8] *δύε*, Q.

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"The sixth Holy Synod, held against Sergius and Cyrus who maintained that in the two natures of Christ there is only one will and one action, assembled under Constantine, grandson of Heraclius."

"And the Holy Synod approved and confirmed the decrees of preceding councils, confessing that the natural qualities of divinity and humanity in Christ are in very truth two wills and two actions; and it anathematised Sergius and Cyrus."

This council was convened by Pope Agathon at the request of the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus against the Monothelites. It was held in A.D. 680.

The last inscription,[1] which has entirely disappeared, related to the second council of Nicaea of A.D. 787, which concluded the iconoclastic controversy. It differed from the others in being in Latin. It was still in great part legible in the time of Quaresmius.[2]

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE BEMA

The fragment of a bilingual inscription in the choir (Fig. 27) is of capital importance, determining as it probably does the date of the mosaic decoration in the church. The Latin version, as may be seen from the very few letters that remain, precedes the Greek[3]; but as the latter is almost complete, it may fitly be taken first. For this inscription accents are occasionally used.

ΕΤΕΛΗΩΘΗ ΤΟ ΠΑΡΟΝ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΔΙΑ ΧΕΙΡΟC ΕΦΡΑΙΜΑ ΗCΤΟΡ(ΙΟΓΡΑΦΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΥCΙΑΤΟΡΟC) ΕΠΙ ΤΗC ΒΑCΙΛΕΙΑC ΜΑ(Ν)ΟΥΗΛ[4] ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΒΑCΙΛΕΩC[5] ΠΟΡΦΥΡΟ-ΓΕΝ(ΝΗΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΚΟΜΝΗΝΟΥ) ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙ ΤΑC (Η)ΜΕΡΑC[6] ΤΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΡΗΓΟC ΙΕΡΟCΟΛΥΜ(ΩΝ ΚΥΡΟΥ ΑΜΜΟΡΙ) ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ (ΤΗC)[7] ΑΓΙΑC ΒΗΘΛΕΕΜ ΑΓΙΩΤΑΤΟΥ ΕΠΙCΚΟΠΟΥ (ΚΥ)ΡΟΥ[8] (ΡΑΟΥΛ ΕΝ ΕΤΕΙ ϛ ϡοζ ΙΝΔΙΚΤΗΟΝ Β)[9]

"This work was finished by the hand of Ephraim, historiographer and artist in mosaic, in the reign of Manuel Comnenus the Great, born in the purple, and in the time of the great king of Jerusalem the lord Amaury, and the most holy bishop of sacred Bethlehem the lord Raoul, in the year 6677, second indiction."

Manuel Comnenus reigned A.D. 1145–1180; Amaury, fifth king of Jerusalem, A.D. 1163–1173; Raoul, bishop of Bethlehem, occupied the see

[1] V. (p. 85) gives the version of Q. with his own corrections and emendations.
[2] Q., p. 669.
[3] Q., p. 672; V., pp. 98, 99. Both describe this inscription as being in the apse. For the actual appearance of χειρὸς and the following words, see Fig. 27.
[4] H. does not seem to have distinguished the ν.
[5] See Fig. 27 for H.'s version of the end of this word.
[6] H. omits the ἡ.
[7] H. omits this word.
[8] The first two letters missing in H.
[9] Q., running three words together, read "Raulineti," thus obtaining an impossible proper name The reading of the date given above is V.'s

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from A.D. 1159 or 1160 to A.D. 1173. The Greek computation placing the birth of Christ in the year of the world 5508, the year 6677 is equivalent to A.D. 1169.

The preceding Latin inscription was a fragment in the time of Quaresmius, but enough then remained to show that it was in hexameters, and that it conveyed the same information as the Greek version. To fill a space cor-

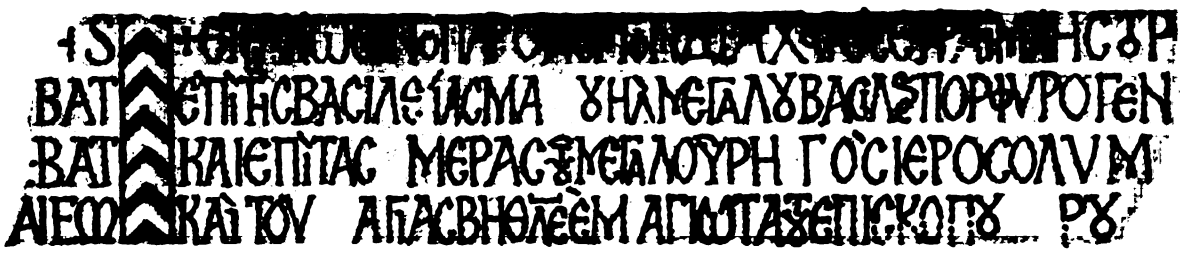

FIG. 27.—REMAINS OF BILINGUAL INSCRIPTION. Scale 1–15.

responding to that occupied by the long Greek lines, ten verses would be required. The remnant seen by Quaresmius is as follows, the part now destroyed being in brackets :

(comes hostis et imp[i]eta)tis[1]
(et Grecis imperita)bat
(hic ecclesiamque doc)ebat
(s Ephrem fertur fecisse tu) autem.

Here the "foe of impiety" is Amaury, the "ruler of the Greeks" is Manuel, the "teacher of the Church," Raoul ; in the last line the weak expression *fertur fecisse*, for *fecit*, is probably used for purely metrical reasons. The style of the versification, as de Vogüé remarks, is characteristically that of the twelfth century. The bilingual inscriptions in this church need excite no surprise in view of the conditions under which the work was executed.[2] Instances of the simultaneous use of Greek and Latin in Palestine have been collected by de Vogüé[3] ; the coinage of the princes of Antioch and Edessa, and the seals of the Latin patriarchs of Jerusalem were all bilingual. Even religious ceremonies were performed in the two languages.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SUBJECTS IN THE TRANSEPTS

These all follow the Eastern and not the Western iconographic types ; and from the description which Quaresmius has left of the Nativity,[4] it is evident that the same was the case with those which have been destroyed.

[1] Inretatis, Q.
[2] By eastern artists under the direction of a western clergy. [3] P. 88.
[4] Quaresmius expresses displeasure at the introduction of the midwives washing the infant, a constant feature in Byzantine representations of the Nativity, but very rare in the West. It may be seen on the mosaic from Orvieto in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

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The south transept contained the Nativity, Adoration, and Return of the Magi, Christ and the Woman of Samaria, the *Transfiguration*, *Entry into Jerusalem*, the Evangelist St. John [and another evangelist], the Betrayal and [scenes from the Passion].

In the north transept were the *Incredulity of Thomas*, *The Ascension* [the two remaining evangelists, and the scenes between the Crucifixion and Ascension]. Of these subjects those in italics survive in whole or in part, those in unbracketed type existed in the time of Quaresmius and are described by him ; those in brackets were already lost at that date, though their previous existence may be safely inferred.

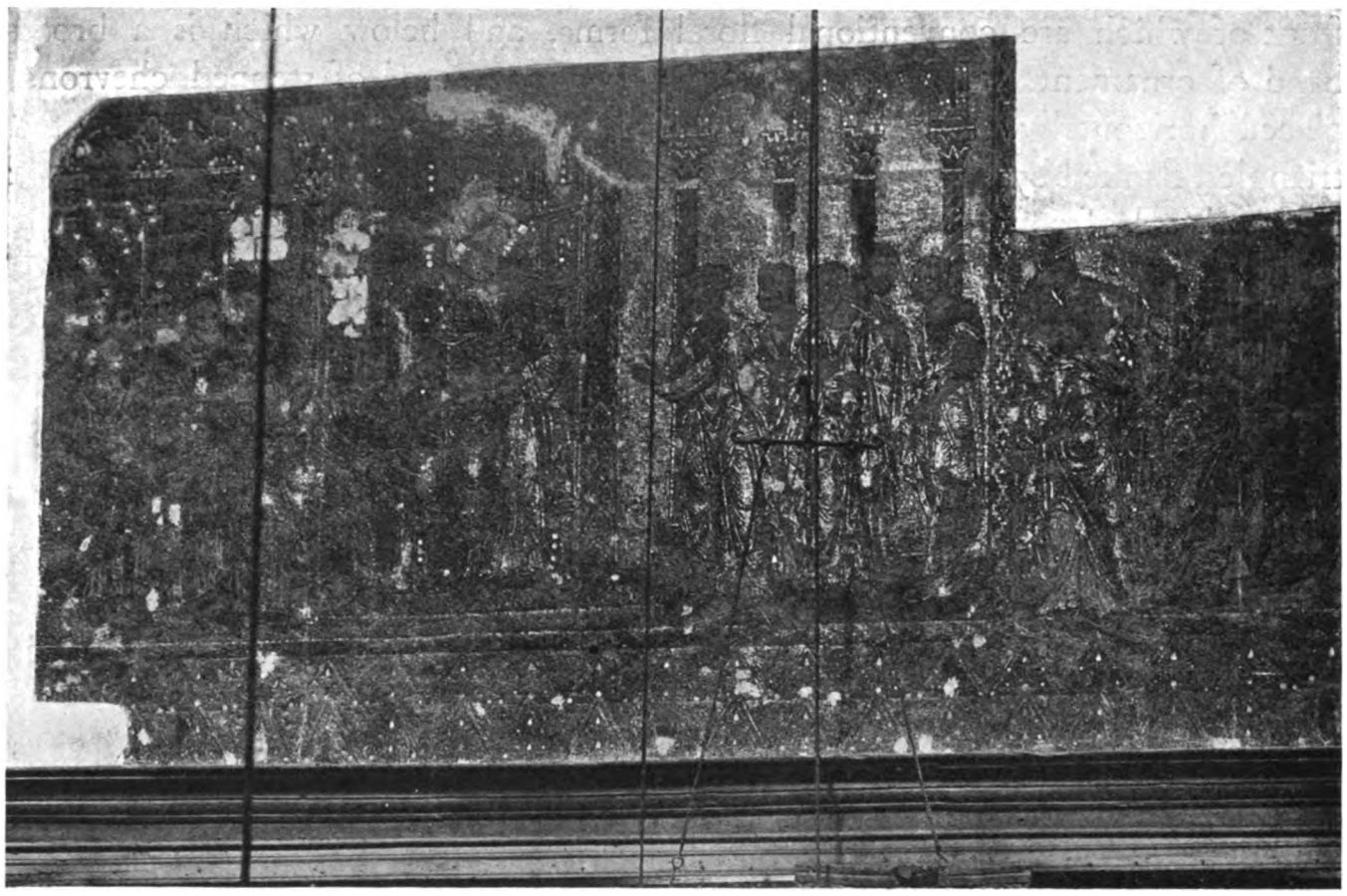

FIG. 28.—MOSAIC OF THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS.

The only surviving mosaics of the Bema, once so richly adorned, are the exceptionally important inscription giving the names of the Emperor Manuel Comnenus and the artist Ephraim (p. 43 and Fig. 27) ; and the fragment of interlaced design (Fig. 25).

The Incredulity of Thomas (west wall of north transept). Our Lord stands in the centre of the composition before a great door with two panelled valves, the frame ornamented with a border of enclosed palmettes, the blue lintel bearing the words PAX VOBIS in gold.[1] He has a

[1] Q. gives IANVIS CLAVSIS as the inscription here, and this would accord with the Byzantine *θύρων κεκλεισμένων*. The discrepancy is curious.

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cruciferous nimbus, and wears a blue tunic and green mantle, with sandals: his long hair falls over his shoulders. With his left hand he draws aside his garment, revealing the wound, to which he guides with his right the hand of St. Thomas. The apostles stand to right and left in symmetrical groups. St. Thomas, who is young and beardless, is foremost of the group on the spectator's left: behind each group is an arcade of three jewelled arches, the middle arch on both sides being pointed. The hands of the apostles are raised or extended, and their heads are turned some towards each other, the rest toward the principal actors in the scene; they wear tunics with clavi, sandals, and mantles; their ages vary, some being youthful, as Thomas, others with beards. They stand upon a band of green, along the front of which are conventional floral forms, and below which is a broad band of ornament in three zones: an upper, composed of stepped chevrons, placed horizontally, in red, black and gold; and two lower, of ornamented triangles, flanked by pairs of acanthus-leaves. Along the top of the picture is a narrow band of conventional floral ornament in gold upon a red ground. It is broken in two places by the ends of hanging draperies. All this ornament is of a character unfamiliar to early Christian times, and appearing in Byzantine art about the close of the first millennium.

The composition follows the Byzantine scheme as described in the *Painter's Guide*, though the hand of our Lord is commonly raised, as in the mosaic in the narthex of the great church of St. Luke in Phocis. The use of the pointed arch in the arcades of the background has been regarded as a concession to Western ideas, and perhaps a symbolic expression of a desire for union between Eastern and Western Christianity,[1] but the hypothesis is superfluous, as the form was no novelty in the East at this time. The horse-shoe form of the accompanying round arches is also oriental; it was very common in Asia Minor, especially Cappadocia.[2] On each side of the column nearest to St. Thomas the inscription INFER DI GITVM TVVM HVC was formerly to be distinguished.[3]

There are many illuminated miniatures with which the scene may be compared. Two examples in the British Museum are the miniatures in the Psalter of Melisenda (see below, p. 51) and the fine book of the Gospels,

[1] See V., p. 97.

[2] The bulbous Asiatic domes on the Church of Sardica and in the Entry into Jerusalem may also be noticed in this connexion.

[3] Q., p. 672. V., p. 96. Traces appear to be represented in Mr. Harvey's drawing. De Vogüé remarks: *Ces inscriptions ont disparu avec une portion du champ doré qui les entourait.* Fig. 29 seems to indicate a partial restoration with plaster. Mr. Sprengling, in a letter dated August 16, 1909, says with regard to these inscriptions: "There is much—in small pieces—broken away and patched in the usual ugly disfiguring fashion so as to hide still more. . . . Of the *infer digitum* neither Mr. Harvey nor I were able to make out anything except a few letters. . . ." Mr. Sprengling is quite positive as to the *Pax Vobis*, "which can from the remnants be distinctly made out."

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Harley MS. 1810 (fol. 261 b). Neither of these bears an inscription, and in both the right hand of Christ is raised. The Gospel miniature has an architectural background of two buildings to right and left connected by a low wall : the foreground is painted green as in the present example.

In both cases there is the same combination of indoor and outdoor features ; the great panelled doors stand in the open, and the feet of the personages rest upon grass. Byzantine artists are unable to represent interiors with any degree of realism, and they do not understand perspective, so that mere indications are substituted for full representation. It will be remembered that the Byzantine Annunciation is always outside the house, and in the scene of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in the gospels of Rossano the doors stand in isolation upon the grass.

The fragment of the *Ascension* (west wall of north transept) is of the traditional Byzantine type, in which the Virgin stands below in the foreground, commonly in the attitude of an *orans* ; on each side of her is an angel, and beyond these stand the apostles in two groups of six. In the upper part of the composition, here destroyed, our Lord is always seen enthroned in a circular or oval glory, supported above and below by four angels. On the upper part of the fragment on the left are the remains of the inscription usually accompanying this scene : VIRI GALILEI QVID STATIS ASPICIENTES IN COELVM. The inscription on the other side, reported by Quaresmius, has disappeared : it was : HIC IĒSVS QVI ASSVMPTVS EST SIC VENIET QUEMADMODVM VIDISTIS EVM.[1] Above the whole composition Quaresmius saw the word ASCENSIO.

The Entry into Jerusalem (east wall of south transept). This picture is incomplete ; the disciples following our Lord, and probably a hilly background with buildings, have been broken away.

The scene is the typical Byzantine rendering of the subject, only varying in detail from the numerous examples known to us. It is found in all its essentials in the Gospel of Rossano (Codex Rossanensis) which is of the sixth century, and was the same long centuries afterwards at the time of the composition of the *Painter's Guide*. Worthy of remark is the bulbous form of the dome above the gate of Jerusalem, a feature suggesting, like the arcade in the Incredulity (see above, p. 46) an oriental influence, and also found in the corresponding miniature in the Psalter of Melisenda. The half disappearance behind a fold of the ground of the figure standing by the palm tree is also noticeable, as also is the covering (like a blinker) over the eyes of the ass. Quaresmius states that in his time the inscription RAMIS PALMARVM IHS XPS accompanied the picture.

In Western representations of the subject, Christ is almost always astride,

[1] Q., p. 672, with abbreviations here expanded ; V., p. 97.

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whereas in East-Christian art he sits sideways. The figures strewing their garments in the way are in Eastern art almost always children.[1] The border is based upon the antique palmette, though white drops or flowers are added to vary the effect. The narrow red band at the top with its alternate red and green jewels in gold settings has been already noted as a survival of a design popular in the sixth century.[2] In this picture the prevailing tones, as in the mosaics of the nave, are red and green.

In the fragment of the *Transfiguration*,[3] on the east wall of the south transept, we see one of the three apostles, dazed by a ray of light proceeding from the glory in which our Lord stands. In the complete scene, as known to us from numerous examples in Byzantine art, our Lord, in a mandorla, or a circular glory, stands on the central of three peaks, while on the lateral peaks stand Moses and Elias. In the foreground, Peter, James and John, in different attitudes, and dazzled by rays of light, express their amazement at the miraculous appearance.[4] The rays issuing from our Lord are a regular Byzantine feature.[5]

FIG. 29.—FRAGMENT OF MOSAIC OF THE TRANSFIGURATION ON EAST WALL OF SOUTH TRANSEPT.
Scale 1–25.

In the time of Quaresmius, the picture was complete, and had above it the inscription TRANSFIGVRATIO DN̄I, while the names HELIAS. IH̄S CH̄S MOISES accompanied the three principal figures.[6]

The ornamental border at the bottom is uniform with that of the Entry into Jerusalem.

A brief note on the Tree of Jesse may not be out of place, though the mosaic, formerly on the west wall (see p. 25), has now entirely disappeared. In mediaeval Europe the subject is first heard of as a work of art at the end of

[1] For the iconography of this scene see E. Dobbert, *Jahrbuch der K. preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xv, 149; A. Haseloff, *Codex purpureus Rossanensis*, p. 91.

[2] It is fortunate that this survival of an ancient design should occur in the border of this particular mosaic, which all are agreed in describing as evidently late. If it had occurred on the north wall of the nave, it might perhaps have been used to support an argument in favour of an early date.

[3] For the iconography of the scene, which is not known in early Christian art, see E. Dobbert, *Jahrbuch*, as above, p. 135; A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, ii, p. 181.

[4] Mr. Harvey fancied he discerned the face and bare arm of a figure in a kneeling attitude on the top of the mound above the figure of the apostle, and a small domed building in the upper left-hand part of the fragment, below the ray of light. The former feature would be unprecedented in any Byzantine Transfiguration. We may note that in late examples of the Scene subsidiary figures are depicted *between* the hills on which Christ, Moses and Elias stand (e.g., Church of the Peribleptos, Mistra: G. Millet, *Monuments byzantius de Mistra*, Plate 119). W. R. Lethaby also draws attention to the fact that in Carolingian art three tabernacles are occasionally represented, as on an ivory carving in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 73, 71: W. Maskell, *Description of the Ivories*, etc., p. 99; Westwood, *Fictile Ivories*, p. 116). The object beneath the left hand of the apostle I am unable to explain.

[5] A. Haseloff, *Eine Thuringisch-Sächsische Malerschule im 13tn Jahrhundert*, pp. 124–127.

[6] This seems to dispose of the interpretation of the fragment as part of the Conversion of St. Paul, adopted by Baumstark and others.

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the eleventh century,[1] and became very common in the thirteenth; but there is some documentary evidence for supposing that the motive is of oriental origin. The *Painter's Guide* of Mount Athos furnishes instructions for painting the Tree of Jesse,[2] and the details correspond in general with those of Western examples. This book is late, but the majority of the types described in it go back to earlier times, and no doubt representations of the Tree, dating from a period as early as the Bethlehem mosaic, may be known to those who possess an exhaustive knowledge of the monuments illustrating Byzantine iconography.

DATE OF THE MOSAICS

Various allusions in the preceding pages will perhaps have already indicated the probable date of these mosaic fragments. The traditional elements surviving from early Christian times, both in ornament and iconographical type, have led some critics to ascribe parts of the decoration to the mosaic scheme existing before the time of Manuel; in these they believe that the old lines were strictly followed, and that in some cases much of the original work may have been preserved. Dr. Baumstark[3] is inclined to regard the decoration of the north wall of the nave, and the Incredulity of Thomas and Ascension in the transept, as parts of such an earlier scheme; he has no doubt been led to this conclusion by the difference of style between the work of the two nave walls, and by the superiority of the two subjects mentioned, to the Transfiguration and the Entry into Jerusalem, points which also impressed themselves on Mr. Harvey. On the other hand it must be remembered that the epigraphy of the Greek inscriptions on the north and south walls of the nave is of the same character, and apparently of the same period as the inscription in the Bema dated to the year A.D. 1167 (p. 43); that the nearest affinities of the fantastic floral ornament are the eleventh-century mosaics at Jerusalem (p. 35); that features of the architecture in the churches, such as the bulbous domes of the Church of Antioch, do not suggest an early date; that the almost affected attitudes of the angels are not those of earlier art, while the manner in which their left wings are turned upwards, is definitely characteristic of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; that the raiment of the angels is coloured and not white, as is almost universally the case in early periods; and that the scheme of colour as a whole is distinct from that of early Christian mosaics, while it resembles that of the Entry into Jerusalem in the transepts,

[1] E. Mâle, *L'art religieux au XIIIe Siècle*, p. 219; Rohault de Fleury, *La Sainte Vierge*, i, p. 17.

[2] G. Schäfer, Ἑρμήνεια τῆς ζωγραφικῆς, *Das Handbuch der Malerei vom Berge Athos*, p. 169. Πῶς ἱστορίζεται ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ, Ἰεσσαί. The date of the guide, written by Dionysios of Fourna, is now known to be the latter part of the fifteenth century.

[3] *Römische Quartalschrift*, 1906, pp. 146–148.

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which all critics are inclined to accept as late. If it is added that the Latin descriptive legends upon the Entry into Jerusalem are of the same character as those upon the Ascension and Incredulity of Thomas, which are of finer workmanship and different in colouring, it will probably be found less confusing to ascribe all the mosaics to a single date. This must be the short period after the second crusade, when the government was in the hands of Latin princes and the church served by Latin clergy, while the Greek Emperor was on friendly terms with both, and lent financial aid to the work of restoration. This theory explains the preponderance of Latin in these descriptive legends[1]; it explains also their stereotyped character. If we may believe Quaresmius, descriptions accompanied every picture, a fact which is in itself in favour of the later date, for descriptions of this kind were gradually formulated, and are as natural in work of Comnenian times as they would be abnormal in the sixth century. Above all, this view further explains that vague quality which we describe as feeling or atmosphere. The feeling of this work is not that of the mosaics of Ravenna, or Parenzo, or Salonica; it is the feeling of a later and more conventional age. Taking all these points into consideration, we shall probably be well advised to follow de Vogüé in assigning all that remains of the mosaics to the twelfth century, and to account for the differences in quality by assuming the presence of several masters, all imbued with Byzantine traditions, but differing in taste and capacity, and not necessarily coming from the same parts of the East.[2] Who shall say from what city Basilius came, or whether Ephraim was born in Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, or the Holy Land itself?[3] Who shall say how many colleagues assisted them in the work?

It has been already mentioned that the crypt was also adorned with mosaics partly described by Phocas, but no considerable fragments remain. The date of these mosaics is not precisely known, but it seems probable that they too belong to the time of Manuel. The description of the Nativity and Annunciation to the Shepherds, given by Phocas, shows that the artists followed the picturesque type so popular in later Byzantine art. The flocks pasturing among the herbage; the dog watching them; the startled shepherds listening to the angelic message; the horses of the dismounted kings—these are all so many features familiar to us in the art of the eleventh and following centuries, they are not so characteristic of the simpler and more sculpturesque repre-

[1] The epigraphy of the Latin words is nowhere inconsistent with that of the twelfth century; the lettering of the names of Christ's ancestors in the nave is certainly of that period.

[2] M. Diehl, *Manuel d'Art byzantin*, p. 527, agrees with this view, noting the fact that the latest Council represented dates from the latter part of the eighth century, and that the execution of such a comprehensive scheme as that of the nave is much less likely under the Mohammedan dominion than during the period of Frankish occupation.

[3] Ephraim is mentioned by Unger, *Quellenschriften der byzantinischen Kunstgeschichte*, p. 53. Basilius does not seem to have been known to him.

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sentation of earlier times. The whole passage reminds us of an ἔκφρασις or word-picture of a work of art, a type of literary exercise very popular with Byzantine writers.

It was no new thing for the artists of the Christian East to seek the patronage of the Latins in the Holy Land; we may conclude this section with another instance of their readiness to work for Western princes. Allusion has already been made to the Psalter of Queen Melisenda in the British Museum,[1] a book illuminated a generation earlier in Jerusalem. This manuscript contains, with other miniatures probably by a Western hand, a series of full-page pictures by a Byzantine painter who signs himself *Basilius*. It is remarkable that the name should coincide with that of one of the artists at Bethlehem, who in like manner signs in Latin characters. The lapse of time between the date of the psalter and that of the mosaic is perhaps rather too long to permit the identification of the illuminator and the designer of the mural decoration; the name is also by no means uncommon, and in itself can prove nothing. Yet the temptation is great to find some connexion between the two; and the Psalter of Melisenda with its two styles of miniature and the blended Eastern and Western elements upon its carved ivory covers, confirms the evidence of the fragments upon the walls at Bethlehem. Both are examples of an art subjected to a dual influence, memorials of that most interesting period in the history of Palestine when the Greek and the Frank worked in harmony for the maintenance of a threatened civilization.

O. M. D.

[1] Egerton, 1139. Exhibited in a Table Case in the Grenville Library.

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Chapter IV

ACCOUNTS BY PILGRIMS AND OTHER VISITORS TO THE CHURCH, ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER[1]

The Great Church, or as it is sometimes called, the Church of Mary, or the Church of the Mother of God, at Bethlehem, which is built over the grotto in which Christian tradition placed the birth of Christ, has been a Holy Place of continuous interest to pilgrims and other travellers in Palestine.

Uncritical records, such as their comments necessarily were, possess more personal than scientific interest. At the time when they wrote, history, as we know it now, did not exist or had been forgotten: its comparative method was replaced by artless narrative.

Too much therefore must not be expected from the accounts of these early visitors. As a rule they throw more light on the temper of the writers than on the objects about which they wrote. They are inconsistent, diffuse, and often inaccurate. Allowance being made for these disabilities, they may be granted much attractiveness, and a guarded degree of belief.

The text which follows will have two objects: (1) to transcribe each successive impression of the church at Bethlehem in the words of the writer, adding a brief estimate of his or her credentials; (2) to extract from the mass of testimony such residue as appears to be of value towards determining the vexed question of the date of the original building.

I. *Bordeaux Pilgrim.*—The earliest visitor of whom we have record was the Bordeaux Pilgrim. The narrative which is known by this title, describes a

[1] Note as to Translations.

Translations marked with an asterisk are copied verbatim from versions already published: those not so marked are either the writer's or modifications, in part, of existing translations. Where a translation has been in any degree made use of, a reference is given to its locus of publication and the translator.

It has not been thought necessary to quote originals written (1) after the 10th century A.D.; (2) at any time when the language used is comparatively unfamiliar, e.g. Arabic or Persian or Russian. Where translations only are given the language of the original is mentioned, and the locus of the translation.

English translations have not been given of all the later originals where a published translation in a familiar modern language is extant.

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journey from Europe by way of Constantinople to Palestine in A.D. 333. Its chief features are terseness, simplicity, straightforwardness, and a complete absence of those minor legendary traditions which seem to have been manufactured to meet the spiritual needs of later pilgrims. Until it reaches Palestine, the narrative is merely a catalogue of places, and, allowing for this, the brief mention of Bethlehem will be appreciated at its full value.

"Ibi basilica facta est, iussu Constantini"[1]—"There a basilica has been built by order of Constantine."[2]

II. *Eusebius' Vita Constantini.*—The next reference in order of time is the account, in Eusebius' Life of Constantine, of the foundation of the church. This work was written between A.D. 337 and 340. The following are the important passages—

"*c.* 41. Ἀπολαβὼν δ' ἐνταυθοῖ χώρας ἑτέρας δυσὶν ἄντροις μυστικοῖς τετιμημένας πλουσίαις καὶ ταῦτα φιλοτιμίαις ἐκόσμει τῷ μὲν τῆς πρώτης τοῦ σωτῆρος θεοφανείας ἄντρῳ, ἔνθα δὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς ἐνσάρκου γενέσεως ἐπέστη, τὰς καταλλήλους νέμων τιμάς, τῷ δὲ τῆς ἐς οὐρανοὺς ἀναλήψεως τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀκρωρείας . . . μνήμην σεμνύνων. Καὶ ταῦτα δὲ φιλοκάλως ἐτίμα, τῆς αὐτοῦ μητρός, ἣ τοσοῦτον ἀγαθὸν τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων διηκονήσατο βίῳ διαιωνίζων τὴν μνήμην.

"*c.* 42. . . . ἦκεν δὴ σπεύδουσα νεανικῶς ἡ πρέσβυς, ὑπερβαλλόυσῃ φρονήσει τὴν ἀξιάγαστον ἀνιστορήσουσα γῆν.

"*c.* 43. Αὐτίκα δ' οὖν τῷ προσκυνηθέντι θεῷ δύο νεὼς ἀφιέρου. τὸν μὲν πρὸς τῷ γενέσεως ἄντρῳ, τὸν δ' ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς ἀναλήψεως ὄρους. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ γένεσιν ὑπομεῖναι ὁ μεθ' ἡμῶν θεὸς δι' ἡμᾶς ἠνέσχετο [καὶ ὁ] τόπος αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐνσάρκου γενέσεως ὀνομαστὶ πάρ' Ἑβραίοις ἡ Βηθλεὲμ ἐκηρύττετο. Διὸ δὴ βασιλὶς ἡ θεοσεβεστάτη τῆς θεοτόκου τὴν κύησιν μνήμασι θαυμαστοῖς κατεκόσμει, παντοίως τὸ τῇδε ἱερὸν ἄντρον φαιδρύνουσα, βασιλεὺς δὲ μακρὸν ὕστερον βασιλικοῖς ἀναθήμασι καὶ ταύτην ἐτίμα, τοῖς ἐξ ἀργύρου καὶ χρυσοῦ κειμηλίοις περιπετάσμασι τε ποικίλοις τὰς τῆς μητρὸς ἐπάυξων φιλοκαλίας.

"καὶ δὴ δύο ταῦτα μνήμης ἐπάξια ἀιωνίου σεμνὰ καὶ περικαλλῆ καθιερώματα ἐπὶ δύο μυστικῶν ἄντρων Ἑλένη ἀυγόυστα θεῷ τῷ αὐτῆς σωτῆρι θεοφίλους βασιλέως θεοφιλὴς μητὴρ ἐυσεβοῦς τεκμήρια διαθέσεως ἵδρυτο, δεξιὰν αὐτῇ βασιλικῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ παιδὸς παρασχομένου."[3]

"*c.* 41. And having selected other places in the same region, which were held in honour by reason of two holy caves, he adorned them also, rendering due honour to that cave which had been the scene of the first manifestation of the Saviour when He submitted to be born in the flesh, and to these he gave magnificent honours, perpetuating the memory of his mother, who worked such a great and good work.

"*c.* 42. So she (the Empress Helena) came, though advanced in years, with the energy of youth, to acquaint herself with this land worthy of all veneration.

"*c.* 43. And forthwith she dedicated two temples to the God whom she worshipped, one at the Cave of the Nativity and the other on the Mount of the Ascension. For He who was God with us submitted for our sakes to be born, and the place of His birth in the flesh was called by the Hebrews Bethlehem. Wherefore the most pious empress adorned the scene or the travail of the Mother of God with rare monuments, beautifying in every way this sacred cave, and shortly afterwards the emperor also honoured it with imperial offerings, with treasures of gold and silver, and with embroidered curtains, thus enhancing the artistry of his mother.

"These then are the two solemn and beautiful shrines—worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance—which the Empress Helen caused to be built at the two holy caves in

[1] Itinerarium a Bordigala Hierusalem usque. Ed. Tobler et Molinier (*Itinera Hierosolymitana*, p. 19).
[2] Tr. by A. Stewart, in *Pal. Pil. Text Soc.* (1887), p. 27. (In future referred to as *P.P.T.S.*)
[3] Eusebius, Εις τὸν βίοι Κωνσταντίνου βασίλεως, Bk. III, c. xli, xlii, xliii.

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honour of God her Saviour, and they are signs of the pious disposition of this godly mother of a godly emperor, to whom her son delegated imperial authority."[1]

III. *St. Paula.*—The next mention of Bethlehem is of considerable interest, because the pilgrim concerned was one who made Bethlehem a home—the holy Paula. Paula was a Roman lady of noble birth, who, amongst others, had been moved by the preaching of Jerome in the last quarter of the fourth century to devote her life to religious observances and her wealth to good works. A genuine weariness of luxury, or an impulse towards the prevailing fashion of asceticism, may have accounted for the conversion of many of these devotees. The immediate cause of Paula's journey to Palestine was the enthusiasm aroused in her by certain of the Bishops of the East, whom she had entertained in her private house at Rome.

After a first visit to Bethlehem, Paula appears to have conceived a wish to settle there permanently, and the last twenty years of her life, till her death in A.D. 404, were spent in Bethlehem. Before that event she had built cells, monasteries, and inns for pilgrims, together with many buildings for charitable purposes, and before her death she became, possibly through this cause, involved in debt. When she died, the whole local Church gathered together to bear her to her last resting-place in the Grotto of the Nativity.

Her testimony is therefore valuable. But unfortunately it does not amount to much. There is one reference to Bethlehem in the so-called Narrative of the holy Paula, in which the narrator is probably Jerome himself, who appears to have accompanied Paula during much of her pilgrimage. Upon the pilgrim's entry into the Grotto of the Saviour—

"When she saw the holy inn of the Virgin and the stable in which the ox knew his owner and the ass his master's crib,"[2]

she appears to have been too much overcome by the sacred associations of the spot to have received any definite impression of the building, or, at any rate, to have thought any such impression worth mentioning.

IV. *Letter of Paula and Eustochium*, A.D. 386.—There is more in the Letter of Paula and Eustochium (Eustochium was her daughter, also at Bethlehem) to Marcella in Rome. But it is difficult to gather from the actual words used what was the intention of the writer. Did she mean to praise the adornment and the buildings on the site of the Nativity? Or did she imply that all the grandest and most sumptuous palaces of Rome were eclipsed by this humble cave? Both meanings are possible, but the tone of the passage

[1] This passage from the Life is translated by T. H. Bernard, in *The Churches of Constantine at Jerusalem*, p. 11, *P.P.T.S.* (1891).

[2] *Sancti Hieronymi peregrinatio Sanctae Paulae* VIII. The translation, in *P.P.T.S.* (1885), VIII, p. 6, is by A. Stewart.

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seems to point to the latter hypothesis, and, if so, the implication would be that there was no considerable building at Bethlehem. Let the reader judge for himself.

"Verum ut ad villulam Christi et Mariae diversorium veniamus (plus enim laudat unusquisque, quod possidet), quo sermone, quâ voce speluncam tibi possumus Salvatoris exponere? Et illud præsepe in quo infantulus vagiit, silentio magis quam infirmo sermone honorandum est. Ubi sunt late porticus? Ubi aurata laquearia? Ubi domus miserorum pænis et damnatorum labore vestite? Ubi, instar palatii, opibus privatorum extructae basilicae, ut vile corpusculum hominis pretiosius inambulet, et quasi mundo quidquam possit esse ornatus, tecta magis sua velit adspicere quam celum. Ecce in hoc parvo terrae foramine celorum conditor natus est, hic involutus pannis, hic visus a pastoribus, hic demonstratus a stella, hic adoratus a magis."[1]

"To come to the village of Christ and the inn of Mary (for each is more inclined to praise that which is his own) how and in what words can we describe to you the Grotto of the Saviour? That manger too, wherein the babe wailed, is better honoured by silence than by imperfect speech. Where are spacious porticoes? Where are gilded ceilings? Where are houses decorated by the sufferings and labours of condemned wretches? Where are halls built by the wealth of private men on the scale of palaces, for the worthless carcase of man to move among more costly surroundings and to view his own roof rather than the heavens, as if anything can be more beautiful than the created world. In this little corner of earth the maker of the universe was born: here he was wrapped in swaddling clothes; here seen by the shepherds; here pointed out by the star; here worshipped by the wise men."[2]

V. *Socrates.*—Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, who lived in Palestine and flourished about the end of the fourth century, and who has the character of an honest writer, says of Bethlehem:

"Ἡ δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως μήτηρ . . . καὶ ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ τῆς Βηθλεὲμ ἐνθὰ ἡ κατα σάρκα γέννησις τοῦ χρίστου ἑτέραν ἐκκλησίαν οὐχ ἧττον κατεσκέυαζεν." [3]

"The mother of the Emperor (i.e. Helena) . . . made preparations for erecting another church no whit inferior (to those at Jerusalem) in the cave at Bethlehem where Christ was born in the flesh."

VI. *Sozomenes.*—Eusebius' statement is confirmed by Sozomenes, another ecclesiastical historian, who wrote at the beginning of the fifth century:

"Ἐν μέρει δὲ καὶ Ἑλένη ἡ αὐτοῦ μήτηρ δύο νάους ᾠκοδόμησε, τὸν μὲν ἐν βηθλεὲμ ἀμφὶ τὸ τῆς γεννήσεως χρίστου σπήλαιον, τοὺ δὲ πρὸς ταῖς ἀκρωρέιαις τοῦ ὄρους τῶν Ἐλαιῶν, ὅθεν ἐπὶ τὸν ὐρανὸν ἀνελήφθη." [4]

"Helen his mother built two churches, one in Bethlehem round the cave where Christ was born, the other on the heights of the Mount of Olives, where He ascended into heaven."

VII. *St. Eucherius.*—The next pilgrim is Eucherius, who, in his own words, compiled an 'Epitome' "by conversation and reading" from the accounts of those who had visited Palestine. His account is thus frankly not

[1] *Paula et Eustochium de Locis Sanctis* (ed. Tobler and Molinier, *It. Hier.*), IV.
[2] I have followed in the main the translation by A. Stewart in *P.P.T.S.* (1889), IV, pp. 11, 12.
[3] *Socratis Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ed. Migne Patr. Graec), Lib. I, c. xvii, c. The translations in this and 4 are my own.
[4] *Sozomeni Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ed. Migne Patr. Graec), Lib. II, c. 2.

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firsthand. The topography is accurate however, and although it is doubtful whether Eucherius, a bishop of Lyons, was the writer, the work may be referred to about his period, viz. A.D. 434–50. Of Bethlehem he writes :

"Ubi præsepe Domini exornatum insuper argento atque auro, fulgenti cella ambitu."[1]

"Where is the manger of the Lord, adorned in its upper part with silver and gold, and the shrine glitters all around."[2]

The precise meaning of the three latter words is doubtful, but they cannot with any approach to accuracy be said to imply a superstructure. The meaning given above is the natural one which the words would bear.

VIII. *St. Ætheria.*—Modern criticism[3] places between A.D. 529 and 534 the pilgrimage of St. Ætheria (previously ascribed to St. Silvia of Aquitania).

Speaking of the splendour of Epiphany services, which found their natural manifestation at Bethlehem, the writer, who was apparently an abbess of some distinction, says :

"Qui autem ornatus sit illa die ecclesiæ, vel Anastasis, aut Crucis, aut in Bethleem, superfluum fuit scribi. Ubi extra aurum et gemmas aut sirico, nihil aliud vides : nam et si vela vides, auroclava oloserica sunt. Ministerium autem omne genus aureum gemmatum profertur illâ die. Numerus autem vel ponderatio de ceriofolis, vel cicindelis, aut lucernis, vel diverso ministerio, nunquid vel estimari aut scribi potest. Nam quid dicam de ornatu fabricæ ipsius, quam Constantinus sub præsentia matris suae, in quantum vires regni sui habuit, honoravit auro musivo et marmore pretioso, tam ecclesiam maiorem, quam Anastasim, vel ad Crucem, vel cetera loca sancta in Ierusolima."[4]

"It is unnecessary to write of the way the churches are adorned on that day, those I mean of the Resurrection, or of the Cross, or the church in Bethlehem. You can see nothing but gold and gems and silk. If you look at the veils, they are of silk, studded with gold ; if you look at the curtains, they are likewise all of silk, studded with gold. All the gold and jewelled vessels are brought out on that day. As to the number and weight of the tapers, or candles, or lamps or different vessels, how could it be estimated or described. What am I to say of the adornment of the building itself, which Constantine decorated with gold and mosaics and precious marbles, to the utmost extent which his kingdom allowed, under the personal supervision of his mother ? The church itself is larger than that of the Resurrection, or the Church of the Cross, or any of the other holy places in Jerusalem."[5]

IX. *Antoninus Martyr.*—The idea of the grotto as a place of glowing ornament rather agrees with the testimony of the next pilgrim, Antoninus Martyr, who visited the Holy Places between A.D. 560 and 570.

"Bethlehem est locus splendidus. Servi Dei multi. Ibi est spelunca ubi natus est Dominus : in qua est praesepe ex auro et argento ornatum, et die noctuque luminaria ibi

[1] *S. Eucherii Epitome de locis aliquibus Sanctis Epistola Eucherii Episcopi ad Faustinum Presbyterium*, c. ix.

[2] The translation by A. Stewart in *P.P.T.S.* (1890), p. 11, is not in my opinion accurate.

[3] "*De itinerario Ætheriae abbatissae perperam nomini S. Silviae addicto*" Carolus Meister in Rhein. Museum, 1909, p. 337.

[4] *S. Silviae peregrinatio* (59), *P.P.T.S.* (1891).

[5] Tr. by J. H. Bernard, p. 50.

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fiunt. Os vero speluncae ad ingrediendum angustum omnino. Hieronymus presbyter in ipso ore speluncae ipsam petram sculpsit, et monumentum sibi fecit, ubi et positus est." [1]

" Bethlehem is a magnificent place, and there are there many servants of God. There is the cave where the Lord was born. In it is a manger adorned with gold and silver, and it is lit with lamps by night and by day. The entrance to the cave is quite narrow. Jerome, the elder of the Church, carved the rock just at the entrance to the cave, and made a tomb for himself, and was buried there." [2]

At this period Bethlehem, in common with the rest of Palestine, was overrun by the successive invasions of the Persians under Chosroes and the Arabs under Omar.

There is contemporary evidence that the invaders, or the terror which they inspired, prohibited access to the town.

X. *Sophronius.*—Sophronius, who at one time in his career was Patriarch of Jerusalem, laments the exclusion from Bethlehem of would-be worshippers on the occasion of the Festival of the Nativity. He indicates the Saracens (for so he calls them) rather than the Persians as in possession of the Holy Places at the time at which he writes (A.D. 635), though the Persians practically evacuated Palestine after A.D. 628.[3]

In his Anacreontics, a curious adaptation of a metre not previously associated with piety, the following architecturally interesting panegyric of Bethlehem occurs—

. . . ἰκόιμην Τάχα βηθλεὲμ πολίχνην Ὅθι παντάναξ ἐτέχθη Ζαθέου τετραστόου δὲ Ἄγαν ἐκπρεποῦς τρικόγχου Μέσον ἐσμολὼν ἐκείνου Ἱεροῦ δόμου χορεύσω Βηθλεὲμ ἐυαγέος κάλλεα δέρκειν Χριστὸς ὁ κεῖθε φανεὶς πάντα με νεύσοι Θαμὰ χρυσοφεγγέας τε Ὀρόων στύλους τε μούσης Μάλα καλλίτευκτον ἔργον Ἀχέων νέφους λαθόιμην, Ἰδέην ἄνω δὲ βλέψω Καλάθωσιν ἀστροφεγγῆ, Ἀπὸ καλλιεργίας γὰρ Χάρις ὀυρανὸιο λάμπει.[4]

" May I straightway reach Bethlehem, where the Lord of all was born, and entering through a noble portico of four columns into the midst of that most splendid triple-vaulted building I will dance for joy. May Christ who was born there grant me to see the beauties of Bethlehem. While I behold the close array of pillars that gleam like gold, a delicately wrought work of art, may I forget my cloud of grief. And I will look at the panelled roof above, glittering like stars, for from the beauty of its fashion a grace as of the firmament shines forth." [5]

XI. *Arculfus.*—In the next century (*cir.* 670 A.D.) Arculfus, bishop of one of the French dioceses, went on pilgrimage to Palestine, and, on his return, got safely as far as Rome, where he took ship for the port nearest his home, probably Bordeaux. But a storm arose which drove the vessel so far out of

[1] *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* c. 29. For "est splendidus" Geyer (*It. Hier. Saec., IIII–VIII.* 1898), reads splendidissimus; for praesepe, ipsum praesepius (vvll ipse praesepius ornatus). There are other unimportant variations. The text given is that adopted by Tobler and Molinier (*It. Hier.*).

[2] The passage is translated by A. Stewart in *P.P.T.S.* (1885), p. 23.

[3] Vide Oratio I. *In Christi Natalitie*, passim (ed. Migne Patr. Graec.).

[4] *S. Sophr. Patr. Hierosol Anacreontica* XIX Εἰς τὴν ἀνάληψιν καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν. 25 (Migne Patr. Graec. 87, iii.).

[5] There is a Latin translation by the side of the Greek. A note in Migne says of τετραστόου Atruin quatuor porticibus suffultum triplicem efformabat concham; concha autem est pars illa quae in conchae formam superne sinuatur.

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her course, that she was cast away on the west coast of Scotland, and Arculfus found himself the guest of Adamnan, the abbot of the monastery in Iona. Adamnan took down his guest's account of his wanderings in the Holy Land as it fell from his lips, and his narrative it is which has come down to us.

What Arculfus says is of great historical importance, as it shows the actual position of the buildings at a period separated from that of Antoninus Martyr by the invasions above referred to.

" In eiusdem civitatis orientali et extremo angulo (v.l.-angusto muro) quasi quaedam naturalis dimidia inest spelunca cuius interior ultima pars praesepe Domini est, in quo natum puerum reclinavit mater ; alius vero, supra dicto contiguus presepio, introeuntibus propior locus propriae nativitatis dominicae traditur fuisse. Illa vero Bethlemitica spelunca presepis dominici tota intrinsecus, ob ipsius honorificatum, marmore adornata est pretioso, cum utique semiäntro super lapideum cenaculum sanctæ Mariae ecclesia supra ipsum locum, ubi Dominus natus specialius traditur, grandi structura fabricata est." [1]

" In the extreme eastern angle is a sort of natural half-cave, the extremity of the interior of which is the Manger of the Lord, in which His mother laid the newborn babe ; but there is another place touching the manger and nearer as you enter, which is said to have been the actual spot of the Nativity. The whole of this cave of the Manger of the Lord at Bethlehem has been adorned on the inside with precious marble, while in the half-cave, above the store chamber, there has been built the Church of St. Mary, above the place where the Lord is said to have been actually born, and a lofty building it is." [2]

XII. *Yakut's Account.*—Arculfus' evidence shows that the church was not substantially damaged by Persians or Arabs, and accords with the other testimony on this point, which is found in the account of Yâkut, a Muslim lexicographer of the thirteenth century, and a voluminous and careful writer. His legend of the preservation of the church from the Arabs is as follows :

* " There is here a church, the like of which is none other in the country round. When the Khalif 'Omar was come to Jerusalem, a monk of Bait Lahm approached him and said ' I would obtain mercy of thee for Bait Lahm.' Said 'Omar, ' I know naught of the place, but would fain see it.' When 'Omar was come there, he said to the people, ' Ye shall have mercy and safe conduct, but it is incumbent upon us that in every place where there are Christians we should erect a mosque.' The monk answered, ' There is in Bait Lahm an arched building (Haniyyah) which is built so as to be turned towards your Kiblah ; take this, therefore, and make of it a mosque for the Muslims, and do not destroy the church.' So 'Omar spared the church, saying his prayer in that arched building, and made of it a mosque." [3]

XIII. *Eutychius.*—Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria, writing at the beginning of the tenth century adds a detail which confirms this story :

" Deinde Bethleem ad eam visendam praefectus cum adesset, orationis tempus intra

[1] *Arculfus de Locis Sanctis* (text of Tobler and Molinier, *It. Hier.*), Book II, c. 2. Beyer inserts " fundata " after " fabricata."

[2] The passage is translated by Rev. J. R. Macpherson in *P.P.T.S.* (1889), p. 28.

[3] Yak 1, 779. The translation is from *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 300, a translation from the works of mediaeval Arab geographers by Guy Le Strange (published for the Committee of Palestine Expl. Fund by A. Watt, 1892).

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Ecclesiam oravit ad arcum Australem. Erat autem arcus totus opere tesselato variegatus. Scripsitque Omar Patriarchae syngrapham ne orarent loco isto Mohammedani nisi singuli . . . Nam et sublato opere variegato ab arcu, quicquid ipsis visum fuit, ibidem scripserunt."[1]

. . . "When the prefect came to Bethlehem to see the church, an opportunity for speaking with him was sought for within the chureh in relation to the south arch. Now this arch was patterned all over with an inlay of mosaic. And Omar wrote instructions to the Patriarch, preventing Moslems from offering up their prayers just there, unless singly. For they used to pick the mosaics out of the arch and scribbled on it whatever they chose."[2]

Eutychius' account of the founding ot the church may be mentioned at this point. He is, as will be seen, singular in ascribing it to Justinian.

"Jussit etiam Imperator[3] legatum Ecclesiam Bethleemiticam que parva fuit diruere, aliamque amplam magnam et pulchram fabricare, adeo ut non esset Hierosolymis templum ipsum pulchrius. Perveniens ergo legatus a diruta ecclesia Bethleemitica eandem eo quo iam se habet modo ædificavit. Cumque his omnibus absolutis ad Imperatorem reversus esset, ille, 'Describe mihi' (inquit) quomodo Ecclesiam Bethleemiticam extruxisti. Quam cum descripsisset haud probavit Imperator descriptionem estam nec nullatinus ipsi placuit, quare valde ipsi iratus—'Acceptos' inquit 'nummos tibi ipsi congessisti, ædificium autem extruxisti male compactum et ecclesiam tenebrosam confecisti nullatenus ex mente mea fabricatum, nec consilium meum secutus es.' Capiteque ipsum plecti iussit."[4]

"Now the Emperor ordered his legate to pull down the church at Bethlehem, which was a small building, and to erect another of such a size and beauty that not even the temple at Jerusalem might vie with it in beauty. So the legate arrived, and had the church at Bethlehem destroyed, and built the church exactly as it stands now, and finished his work, and returned to the Emperor, who proceeded to question him as to the way in which he had built the church at Bethlehem. But when he had described the building the Emperor was not at all pleased with the description, and indeed became very angry. 'I gave you money,' he said, 'and you have pocketed it all, but the building you have erected is badly put together, the church is quite dark, and the result is not at all what I intended or according to the plan I told you to follow.' And straightway he ordered him to be punished."[5]

XIV. *Venerable Beae.*—The Venerable Bede (*c.* 700 A.D.) describes the church in almost the same words as Arculfus, from whom his account is probably largely derived.

"Naturale semiantrum est cuius exterior Nativitatis Dominicae fuisse dicitur locus, interior presepe Domini nominatur. Hec spelunca, tota interius pretioso marmore tecta, supra ipsum locum, ubi Dominus natus specialius traditur, Sancte Marie grandem gestat ecclesiam."[6]

"There is a natural half cave, the exterior of which is said to have been the place of the Nativity of the Lord, while the interior is called the Manger of the Lord. This cave, covered all over inside with precious marble, has a mighty church to the Holy Mary, built over the exact spot where tradition places the birth of the Lord."[7]

[1] *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, Book II, 288, 289, 290 (ed. Migne Patr. Graec. III.).
[2] This translation is my own. The "prefect" is, I think, a Saracen emir.
[3] Justinian.
[4] *Eutych. Al. Annales* (ed. Migne Patr. Graec.), p. 1070, 159 and 160.
[5] This translation is my own.
[6] *Beda Venerabilis De Locis Sanctis* (ed. T. and M.) VIII.
[7] Translated by Rev. J. R. Macpherson, in *P.P.T.S.* (1889), p. 76.

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XV. *St. Willibald.*—St. Willibald, probably an English pilgrim, visited Palestine about 754 A.D. Of Bethlehem he writes:

"Ille locus, ubi Christus natus est, quondam fuit spelunca sub terra, et nunc est quadrangula domus in petra excisa, et est terra circumquaque effossa et inde projecta. Et ibi supra nunc est ædificata ecclesia. Et ubi Dominus natus est, ibi stat supra nunc altare, et aliud altare minus factum est. . . . Illa ecclesia, ubi Dominus natus est, quae ibi supra stat, est in similitudine crucis ædificata gloriosa domus."[1]

"The place, where Christ was born, was once an underground cave; now it is a quadrangular excavation in the rock, with the earth all dug out from around it and thrown out. Above it there has now been built a church. In the place where the Lord was born there stands an altar now, and another smaller altar has also been made. The church which stands over the place where the Lord was born, is a magnificent building built in a cruciform shape."[2]

XVI. *Commemoratorium de casis Dei* (*c.* 808 A.D.).—The ninth century is not rich in records of the church. There is a mention in the "Commemoratorium de casis Dei vel monasteriis," written at the beginning of the century by an unknown author, which is of some importance, but unhappily fragmentary.

"Ecclesia in Bethlehem in longo dexteros XXXVIII, in fronte superiore ——, in illa cruce XXIII, in alia fronte XVII, columnas LXIX."[3]

XVII. *Bernard the Monk.*—There is a mention in the Itinerary of Bernard the Monk, dated to A.D. 870.

"Bethleem ergo habet ecclesiam valde magnam in honore sanctae Mariae, in cuius medio est crypta (v. l. scriptura) sub uno lapide. Cuius introitus est ad meridiem (v. l. a meridie) exitus vero ad orientem. In quo ostenditur praesepium Domini ad occidentem ipsius cryptae (v. l. scripturae): locus autem in quo Dominus vagiit, est ad orientem, habens altare ubi celebratur missa."[4]

"Bethlehem has a very large church dedicated to the Holy Mary, in the midst of which under one stone is the crypt. The entrance to the crypt looks south, the exit east. In it they show the Lord's manger, on the west of the crypt: but the spot where He first wailed is on the east side, and has an altar where mass is celebrated."[5]

The Holy Places outside Bethlehem suffered considerably in the continuous later inroads of the Saracens. But it is probable that the church at Bethlehem did not suffer to any serious extent.

XVIII. *Saewulf.*—In the first place there is the definite statement of Saewulf, a pilgrim who visited Bethlehem in A.D. 1102–3—the beginning of the Frankish occupation—that

[1] *Sanctimonialis Heydenheimensis Hodoeporicon S. Willibaldi* (ed. T. and M.) c. xxii.
[2] Translated by the Rev. Canon Brownlow, in *P.P.T.S.* (1891), pp. 22, 23.
[3] Ed. T. and M., subhead. *Ecclesia in Bethlehem.* I have found no translation, and, as the passage is so obscure, have not appended one in the text. Assuming dexteros to be a measure equivalent to paces (i.e. about a yard), and comparing with measurements of other pilgrims, the meaning *may* be "38 paces long, 23 wide (at the cross), 17 wide elsewhere, 69 columns."
[4] *Itinerarium Bernardi Monachi* (ed. T. and M.) XVII.
[5] Translated by J. H. Bernard, in *P.P.T.S.* (1893), p. 9.

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* "everything has been devastated, except the monastery of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord, which is great and renowned."[1]

Then there is the growth of legends, all pointing to a similar preservation. One relates how, while the infidels were endeavouring to destroy the church, all at once a dazzling light appeared to them, and all were thrown to the ground and died on the spot. Another, and a more circumstantial one, is the story, repeated with variations by several pilgrims after the twelfth century, of the miraculous serpent, which saved the church from the impious fury of the Soldan.

XIX. *Marino Sanuto.*—The best account of this miracle, and the only one which need be given, is by a much later pilgrim, Marino Sanuto, A.D. 1321, in his "Secrets for true Crusaders to help them to recover the Holy Land."

* "One goes down from the church to the place of the most sweet Nativity by ten steps, which lead into the chapel. The inside of this chapel is all of mosaic work. It is paved with marble and it is built in exceedingly costly fashion. One could hardly find a fairer church in the world, for there are therein most noble pillars of marble, set in four rows, and remarkable, not only for their number, but also for their size. Moreover the nave of the church above the pillars is of most beauteous and noble mosaic work, whereon is depicted all history, from the creation of the world to the coming of Christ to judge the same. Moreover all the pavement of this church is of marble of divers colours, adorned with a wondrous variety of patterns. On the right hand side of the choir is the place where the Holy Innocents were buried, and an altar has been set up there. One of the Soldans ordered the precious marble slabs and columns of the church to be taken to Cairo, to build him a palace; but when workmen came in the Soldan's presence with their tools to carry out his commands, out of the sound unbroken wall, from which not so much as a needle could be drawn, there came forth a serpent of wondrous size, who gave a bite to the first slab to which it came, and the slab straightway split across. It did likewise to the next, and so on to the rest in order, to the number of forty. All stood amazed, and the Soldan gave up his intention, whereupon the serpent disappeared. From thenceforth the church has remained and remains to this day even as it was at the first. The Saracens respect all churches which are dedicated to the glorious Virgin, but this one above all others. Even to this day the track of the serpent may be seen on each of the slabs, as though they had been burned with fire. Besides all the rest, it is a miracle how the serpent could pass along them, seeing that the wall is smooth and polished as glass."[2]

Such legends as this were, of course, the recognized mediæval method of accounting for events which seemed inexplicable on any ordinary theory of cause and effect. Their historical value is that they point to something out of the ordinary course. It does not follow that that something never happened because legends have grown up around it. If the church at Bethlehem

[1] The original Latin is "Ibi nihil a Sarracenis est remissum habitabile, sed omnia devastata sicut in aliis omnibus sanctis locis extra murum civitatis ierīm, preter monasterium Beate Virginis Marie matris domini nostri, quod est magnum atque preclarum (*P.P.T.S.*, 1892, p. 45). The translation is by the Rev. Canon Brownlow. There are further details in Saewu'f, but they add nothing to previous information.

[2] *P.P.T.S.* (1896), pp. 51–5. Translated by A. Stewart. Sanuto wrote this work in Latin.

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had suffered the ordinary fate of unprotected Christian buildings, there would have been no legends at all on the subject.

It will be seen from the accounts of later writers that the suggestion that the interior of the church was entirely spared must be accepted with considerable reservation. It would be too much to expect so rich a prize to enjoy continual immunity from marauding and hostile hands.

But for one reason or another which now we cannot accurately know, whether from the caprice of an Eastern potentate, or from its special sanctity, or—a possible explanation of the story of the serpent—owing to some sudden storm with lightning that cracked the marble and profoundly impressed the superstitious, the church does seem, up to the twelfth century at all events, to have escaped. Its preservation, however, cannot be accounted for.

XX. *Mukaddasi.*—In or about 982 A.D. Mukaddasi, an Arabian architect, and a learned and cultivated observer, visited Palestine in the course of his travels, and (presumably) saw this church at Bethlehem, of which he writes :

* "There is also a church . . . the equal of which does not exist anywhere in the country round."[1]

XXI. *Nazir-i-Khisrau.*—The next traveller to note Bethlehem was Nazir-i-Khisrau, a Persian, who visited Jerusalem in A.D. 1047, on his way to and from Mecca, and mentions Bethlehem as

* "A place belonging to the Christians, which they hold in greatest veneration. . . . The Christians hold a festival here, and many will come to it all the way from Rûm (i.e. the Greek Empire)."[2]

The period of the Frankish empire in Jerusalem (*cir.* 1099-1187 A.D.) coincides, as might be expected, with a great increase in the number of visitors to Palestine. Bethlehem itself was, during this period, a city of considerable importance. There is no reason to doubt the story that Baldwin was anointed and crowned King of Jerusalem in the church of Mary in 1101 by the Patriarch Daimbert. The reason was, in all probability, the demolition of other considerable buildings in the neighbourhood.

Besides Saewulf, whose pilgrimage has been already noted, there are records of no less than seven travellers who visited the church at Bethlehem.

XXII. *Abbot Daniel.*—The first of these is the Russian Abbot Daniel, A.D. 1106-7. According to the Abbot's own account, he describes nothing that he did not see with his own eyes, and this statement is supported by the

[1] Muk. 172. Translation from *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 298.
[2] N. Kh. 53. The origin of the translation is the same as in 1, at p. 299. The original is in Persian.

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internal evidence of the narrative. It is moreover the record of a presumably cultivated man.

The account of Bethlehem bears evidence of careful personal inspection, and even of measurement (though it must be said that the Abbot's measurements elsewhere are often wrong), and is noticeably devoid of any inclination to repeat stock legends.

* "A large church in the form of a cross, with a wooden roof, rises above the grotto of the Nativity. The roof is entirely covered with tin (lead ?) and the interior is ornamented with pictures in mosaic. It has fifty (eight according to some MS., 48 in fact) monolithic marble columns, and is paved with white marble slabs. There are three (v.l. two) doors. Its length to the great altar is 50 sagènes, its breadth 20 (v.l. length "eight" and "thirty," breadth "fifty" and "eight"). Under the great altar are the grotto and the manger where Christ's Nativity took place, forming a fine and spacious cavern; you descend by several steps to the door of the holy grotto, which has two entrances, to each of which you descend by seven steps. On entering the holy grotto by the east (should be "north") door you see on the left hand, upon the floor, the place where Christ was born. Above is an altar. . . . The place (of the Nativity) is on the east side, and opposite, a little to the right (should be "left") is the manger of Christ underneath a rock of stone on the west (should be "east") side. . . . These two places are quite close to one another, being only two sagènes apart, and in the same cavern, which is covered with mosaics and well paved. Beneath the church are caverns. . . . In going out of the church there is to the right (should be "south") a deep cavern underneath the church, where the remains of the Holy Innocents were buried. . . . A high wall surrounds the church. The place of the Nativity was situated upon an uninhabited and desert mountain which is now encircled by walls and indicates the place of Christ's Nativity. Ancient Bethlehem was a little in front of the actual place of Christ's nativity."[1]

XXIII. *Idrisi.*—The next account is that of Idrisi, another geographer, and may be referred to the early part of the twelfth century.

* "At Bethlehem is a church that is beautifully built, of solid foundation, spacious, and finely ornamented even to the uttermost, so that nowhere among all other churches can be seen its equal. It is situated on a low-lying piece of ground. The gate thereof is toward the west, and there are (in the church) columns of perfect beauty. In one angle of the choir (al Haikâl), towards the north, is a cave wherein the Lord Messiah was born. It lies below the church, and in this cave is the manger.[2]

The remaining five records of the twelfth century are those of Fetellus, Theoderich, John of Würzburg, Ali of Herat, and John Phocas.

XXIV. *Fetellus.*—Of the first of these, ascribed to *Fetellus* (*c.* 1130 A.D.), nothing is known except that Fetellus could not have been its author. An edition of the treatise was brought out by him, but who the original pilgrim was, and what were his credentials, it is impossible to say.

[1] The original is in Russian. This translation (including the interpolations) is in *P.P.T.S.* (1888), c. xlvii, and is (apparently) by the hand of Col. Sir C. W. Wilson. There is a French translation in Khitrowô *Itinéraries Russes en Orient* (Soc. de l'Orient. Lat.).

[2] The original is in Arabic. In *Recueil de Voyages et de Mémories publié par le Société Géographique*, vol. 5, Paris, 1836, p. 346, is a French translation. This translation is by G. Le Strange (*Palestine under the Moslems*).

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He speaks of the Church of St. Mary at Bethlehem as

* " of considerable beauty, within which is the crypt where the most blessed V. M. bore the Saviour of the world, containing the manger where Christ was laid, and . . . before the crypt is still a well of cold and sweet water, into which it is said that the star fell which guided the three magi to the entrance of that crypt. Moreover those who go out from the church,[1] find near the door two crypts, one higher, the other lower. In the higher lies the most blessed Paula, at whose feet lies her daughter, the most sacred virgin Eustochium. One descends to the lower crypt by many steps, and there is the sepulchre in which lies the most sacred body of the most blessed Jerome, the renowned Doctor."

Elsewhere he says—

" In Bethlehem, close to the Place of the Nativity, is the manger in which the infant Jesus lay ; it was brought to Rome by Queen Helena, and honourably laid in the Basilica of St. Mary the Greater." [2]

The next two pilgrims, Theoderich and John of Würzburg, agree very closely, and it is probable that what they did not actually see they took from some common source.

XXV. *Theoderich.*—Theoderich says of the church at Bethlehem, which he may have seen, the church was

* " honoured by the distinction of being a bishop's cathedral church. The high altar is dedicated to our blessed Lady Mary. At the extremity of the right-hand apse, by the side of the door, one descends by twenty-five steps into a subterranean grotto, where is a holy altar of a hollow form, having a cross marked upon the ground. Upon this place (vide subsequent account of John of Würzburg) are written the following lines—

Of angels' virtues chier beyond compare,
A virgin here the Very God did bear.

" On the right hand, or towards the west, in this same cave, one descends four steps, and so comes to the manger, wherein once not only lay hay for cattle, but food for angels was found. The manger itself has been encased in white marble, with three round holes on the upper part, through which pilgrims offer to the manger their long-wished-for kisses. This crypt is moreover beautifully decorated with mosaic work. Above the cave stands a holy chapel, vaulted in a double form, wherein on the south side is a holy altar, and on the west the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea is shown in the wall. . . . On the roof of the church itself a star of well-gilded copper glitters on the end of a lance, in allusion to the three magi." [3]

XXVI. *John of Würzburg.*—John of Würzburg, a German monk who visited Palestine between A.D. 1160 and 1170, gives a shorter description, omitting a good many details that Theoderich inserts, but quoting the same verses over the altar, and adding that they were inscribed in gilded mosaic work.[4]

It seems probable that both he and Theoderich describe what they had actually seen.

[1] *P.P.T.S.* (1892), p. 6, translated by Rev. J. R. Macpherson. The original is in Latin.
[2] *P.P.T.S.*, p. 35.
[3] The original Latin is translated by A. Stewart in *P.P.T.S.* (1891), xxiii, p. 51.
[4] The original is in Mediæval Latin. A translation has been published by A. Stewart, *P.P.T.S.*, c. xix, p. 54.

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XXVII. *Ali of Herat.*—Ali of Herat, a Moslem writer, composed in A.D. 1173 a small work called "The Places of Pilgrimage." He gives one interesting piece of information.

"There (at Baitlahm) is also a church most wonderfully built with marble and gold mosaics and columns. The date of its building is more than 1200 years ago as is shown by an inscription on a wooden beam, which has not suffered damage even down to our own days. There is here the place of the palm tree mentioned in the Kurân, also the Mihrâb of the Khalif 'Omar, which has in nowise been damaged by the Franks."[1]

XXVIII. *John Phocas.*—John Phocas, A.D. 1185, had certainly seen the places of which he wrote. A Byzantine soldier turned monk, he adds to the enthusiasm of the convert a military belief in all that he is told to believe. At the same time he was a shrewd and receptive spectator, and his account is specially interesting as it professes to date the restoration of the mosaics by the Emperor Manuel Comnenus, under whom Phocas performed his military service.

* "The holy Bethlehem is built upon a rocky hill, wherein is the sacred grotto and the manger, and the well from which David desired to drink; and a church of great length is to be seen, built upon the top of the grotto; it is of great size, in the figure of a cross, roofed with beams of imperishable wood; but the ceiling above the altar is formed of a stone vault. This most beautiful and vast church was also built by the munificent hand of my world-saving Emperor, who has also adorned the entire church with golden mosaic work: wherein in many places, and especially in the sacrarium itself, above the holy grotto, the pastor in charge of those in that place who follow the Latin rite, has placed the beauteous portrait of the Emperor, probably meaning thereby to thank him for his magnanimity. Now the position of the grotto, of the manger, and of the well, is as follows. On the left side of the sacrarium (*βῆμα*) is the opening into the holy grotto, and close by is that well of which our forefather David desired to drink both bodily and spiritually. Two men who were highest in his favour cut their way through the enemy's camp, drew the water in the bucket, and brought it to allay his burning thirst, and he performed that celebrated action of pouring it as a libation in honour of God. From the entrance of the grotto to the bottom is a descent of sixteen steps. Upon the northern side of it, is that holy inn, wherein the Virgin was delivered of the Saviour Christ. . . . One step below this may be seen the manger of the beasts, of an equal sided quadrangular shape, which the ancients have covered with white marble, leaving a round aperture in the middle . . . through which a portion can be seen of that manger. I leap for joy as I write, and am altogether in the spirit within that holy grotto. . . .

"The artist has painted with a skilful hand in that grotto the mysteries which there took place. In the apse is figured the Virgin reclining upon her bed, with her left hand placed beneath her right elbow, and leaning her cheek upon her right hand as she looks at the infant, showing her innate modesty in her smiling expression and in the colour of her cheeks. . . . Beyond her are the ox and the ass, the manger and the babe, and the company of shepherds in whose ears the voice of Heaven rang so that they left their flocks, allowing their sheep to pasture unwatched upon the grass beside the spring, giving their dog charge of them, while they raised their necks heavenwards, listening eagerly to the sound of the voice, standing in various attitudes as each thought that he could stand most easily; their shepherds' crooks appear useless, but their eyes are fixed upon Heaven,

[1] A. H., Oxf. MS. fol. 41, v. The translation is from *Palestine under the Moslems*, pp. 299, 300.

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and drawing their right hands backwards as if to hurl a dart they eagerly strain their ears, for an angel meeting them shows them the babe lying in the manger. The beasts do not turn round to behold this sight, but stupidly betake themselves the one to the grass and the other to the above mentioned spring; but the dog, a creature that is savage with strangers, appears to be intently gazing upon the unwonted spectacle; while the magi, leaping from their horses, bearing their gifts in their hands and bending their knees, present them to the Virgin with awe."[1]

It is to be noted, and de Vogüé has called attention to the circumstance as dating the restoration of the interior of the building, that this is the first mention of mosaics with figures. Phocas alludes of course to the mosaics now indecipherable in the grotto.

XXIX. *Sir John Mandeville.*—Among the visitors to Palestine in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries may be placed Sir John Mandeville. He has not much to say about the church at Bethlehem, which he visited at some date, not now verifiable, between A.D. 1322 and 1357.

"A faire kirke with many kirnelles and toures and well bretist all aboute; and within that kirk er xliii pilers of marble, grete and faire."[2]

XXX. *Grethenios.* — In A.D. 1400 a Russian pilgrim, Grethenios, Archimandrite of the Convent of St. Mary, mentions it in the following passage:

"L'église de B *était* tres grande et au dessous il y avait une citerne. Il ne reste actuellement de toute l'église qu'une seule chapelle recouverte d'étain, au dessus de la sainte grotte; et les murs et le pavé en sont très ingénieusement revêtus d'albâtre. Depuis la porte d'entrée jusqu' à l'autel, on compte des deux côtés quarante-quatre belles et grandes colonnes, et dans l'autel elles sont au nombre de six. Sous le saint autel se trouve la sainte grotte et la crèche. On descend cinq marches jusqu' à la porte, et, l'ayant franchie, encore treize marches jusqu' à la sainte crèche. La crèche a cinq pieds sur trois de large, et deux portes, l'une au nord, et l'autre au midi. Quant à la grotte ou caverne, elle a cinq sagènes de chaque côtè, et une et demie de largeur. . . . L'église et l'autel sont ornés des deux côtés de mosäique dorée: le toit est en charpente. A côté de la table de prothèse, se trouve une citerne, dans l'eau de laquelle ou voit briller l'étoile qui guida les mages.[3]

XXXI. *Zosima.*—Another Russian pilgrim, the deacon Zosima, whose visit may be dated A.D. 1419-1421, was much struck with the building.

"Une magnifique église de la Nativité de Christ s'y élève au dessus de la grotte Il n'y en a pas de pareille à Jerusalem, et elle contient quarante colonnes en ardoise superbe et marbre rouge."[4]

The next two pilgrims, John Poloner and Felix Fabri, belong also to the fifteenth century. By this time the pilgrimages to Palestine had become a regularly organized tour, under the conduct of the Venetians.

[1] The original is in Greek. The translation, by A. Stewart, is in *P.P.T.S.*, 1889, c. xxvii.

[2] "Buke of John Maundevill" (ed. G. F. Warner, printed for Roxburghe Club in 1889), p. 35 and 29 b. There is a variant reading of forty-four in other editions of Mandeville. He speaks of the church as being towards the east end of the city.

[3] Khitrowo, *Le Pélérinage de Grethénios*, c. xv (It. Rus. en Orient).

[4] Khitrowo, *Vie et Pélérinage du Diacre Zosime* (It. Rus. en Orient), p. 216 (1889 edition).

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XXXII. *John Poloner.*—Poloner visited Palestine in A.D. 1422, and his account of the church at Bethlehem repeats the current legends as to the star, the manger, and the serpent already noticed. His possible merit is that, as a cartographer (he is the first pilgrim who made a map of Palestine), his measurements are careful.

"One goes down sixteen steps into a chapel beneath the choir. . . . At the same place, on the left hand as one comes in, there is an altar. Seven feet and three steps from this, beneath the rock, is the manger. Note that this church is thirty-six paces long on the inside, eighteen paces wide, and has four rows of marble columns. Each of these rows has twelve columns, seven feet apart, as far as the choir. It is crowded with every kind of ornament, both on the pavement, and on the walls, and is covered by a leaden roof. It has Christ's genealogy painted in mosaics up above on the right-hand side as one comes in. Its twofold door is of cypress wood carved with divers mouldings ; its sidewalls here covered with marble slabs, which have been carried off by the traitorous Saracens. . . . In the cloister of this monastery on the north side one goes down nineteen steps into the chapel, which is called St. Jerome's study.[1]

XXXIII. *Felix Fabri.*—Brother Felix Fabri was a monk who visited Palestine in A.D. 1484. He begins his account of Bethlehem with an allusion to the tradition that, in the period prior to the fourth century, the Cave of the Nativity was ordained (by Aelius Hadrianus the emperor)

"to be used for wailing for Adonis, so that Adonis, the darling of the most unchaste Venus, was now wailed for in the cave wherein Christ had once cried as a babe, and the most chaste Virgin had nursed him."

The original authority for this story appears to be Jerome, and the story is repeated in Eusebius.

"The place remained for more than three hundred years given up to the vile service of idols, at the end of which time, God raised up the soul of that holy woman Helena . . . who after she had become Empress . . . hurried from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, where she cleansed the place of the most sweet nativity of the Lord . . . overthrew all that she found there and beneath the ruins found the Lord's manger entire . . . When she had cleansed this spot, she built above it a church of wondrous beauty. She called together the best workmen in wood and stone, and told them of her design, which was that an exceedingly costly church should be built here, but in such a manner that the rock beneath which the Saviour was born should remain untouched. So the workmen prepared the place for the building of a great church, and placed therein none but chosen pieces of wood and stone, white and polished slabs of marble, exceeding precious columns, and beams of cedar and cypress-wood. . . . This holy woman . . . covered all the walls and all the pavement with white or variegated marble, and caused the upper part of the walls to be painted in mosaic work. Thus was built a great and noble church of oblong form . . . in such sort that the Cave of the Lord's Nativity remained untouched immediately beneath the choir, beneath the sanctuary. This church is built after the fashion of Roman churches, for it has first of all at the west end a covered porch before the doors of the church, and when one enters a great wide and long nave : and beyond this, to the eastward, a choir, into which one ascends by some steps from the nave, from which choir one goes up into the sanctuary and

[1] The original is in Latin and is Tobler's text. The translation, by A. Stewart, is in *P.P.T.S.*, 25 (1894), p. 18 ff. Much that Poloner says is common to Fabri ; probably both pilgrims repeated some guide-stories.

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into the presbytery. . . . On either side of the choir are chapels, and on either side of the nave are apses (?). . . . There are two doors leading into the crypt. The way down into the crypt is by sixteen steps. It has a roof made of lead and is not vaulted . . . It has a round choir full of windows and a passage on the outside above the windows. The nave has many windows on each side. . . . The church measures thirty-seven paces in length, and eighteen in width. It contains four rows of costly columns . . . and each one of them is made of a single solid stone and they are polished with oil so that a man can see his face in them as in a mirror. So it is also with the slabs of polished marble. . . . Each row of columns has twelve columns, and each column is twelve paces distant from the one next to it, and in all there are seventy. . . . Above the capitals of the columns are placed beams of imperishable wood from which on either side a wall rises up as far as the roof. This wall, from the columns as far as the windows, is not painted but inlaid (lasura), being adorned with mosaic work with wondrous art on either side, like the Church of S. Mark at Venice, with figures from the New Testament, and corresponding figures from the Old Testament, and the whole church is either cased with white polished marble or adorned with mosaic work. Above all, the Cave of the Nativity beneath the choir is adorned with exceeding costly pavements and wall slabs and pictures. In all these matters the saintly woman spared no expenses . . . wherefore the Jews in derision used to call (her) 'the woman of the stable' because she built so costly a building over a humble stable."[1]

Fabri repeats the story of the miraculous serpent who preserved the church with picturesque additions.

"He gave a bite to the first marble slab and split it with his fiery tongue. . . . He leaped into the chapel of the Three Kings, ran along that highly polished wall whereon not even a spider could plant its feet, split forty slabs in two and disappeared."

Three times afterwards, in 1341, and twice later, he says, did the Saracens try to carry away the precious marbles. On the second occasion they turned their attention to the slabs in the grotto.

"When they had gone down with their tools to lift up the slabs, whatever they touched . . . continually broke into the smallest possible pieces like rotten wood."

On the third

"some curious and greedy youths climbed into the church by night through the window above the altar."

But the slabs again dissolved at their touch.

"It is said to be true," Fabri adds, "that no Saracen can carry anything out of the church himself with his own hands."

This disability, however, he continues, unfortunately did not extend to Christian thieves.

During Fabri's first pilgrimage the roof of the church was threatening to fall in upon the choir, and was held up by long beams set up on the

[1] *P.P.T.S.* (1892). The original Latin is translated by A. Stewart. This reference is at p. 589 in vol. 1. The story of the church, which is told at considerable length, is well worth reading in full. There is one legendary episode in particular (pp. 595, 596) which cannot be transcribed, but which is additional evidence (if traditional) that the Saracens respected the church, in this particular instance, more than the Christians.

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pavement of the choir. This was subsequently repaired with the Sultan's permission by workmen from Venice, the old wood, which was cedar and cypress from Lebanon, being replaced by pine. The reason for the change in material is stated to have been the difficulty of getting timber from Lebanon, which was occupied by infidels.

"Since the restoration of the church, the whole of the church has become cleaner, for, before it, the roof was full of pigeons and sparrows. . . . Since it has been repaired, martens have come, which run about here and leave no bird alive."

For all this repair however the building at the time of Fabri's visit appears to have been in a state of dilapidation.

"The church is in its upper part profaned and desecrated, nor has it one single lamp in its upper part, neither in the choir, nor in the nave, nor in the chapels, but it stands like a barn without hay, an apothecary's shop without pots of drugs, or a library without books ; the precious pictures are dropping from the walls and there is no one to restore them."

On another visit however, to Bethlehem, at a later date, Fabri rejects the story of the Empress Helena having built the church.

Whatever his defects of credulity and prolixity, Fabri can tell a story, and his account is perhaps the best historical appreciation of the church that has survived.

Fabri's account of the dilapidation and restoration of the church in the fifteenth century is confirmed by Fra Francesco Suriano in his "Trattato di Terra Santa e dell 'Oriente."

XXXIV. *Fra Francesco Suriano.*—Suriano, who was born about A.D. 1450, was a Venetian patrician and a man of culture, who subsequently took orders and travelled in Palestine.

"The holy Helen was desirous of making this church beautiful and costly beyond all the churches in the East. It was one hundred and fifty-five paces[1] long and fifty-five broad, and was built in three parts in the form of a cross. It has fifty columns, each of one piece, twenty-five of them are banded with red stone. Above these columns are the walls, the whole of them worked over in mosaic and covered with Latin and Greek inscriptions.

"The walls ot the church on the inside are lined with a covering ot the finest marble, and so is all the floor. The roof of the church is entirely composed of cypress and cedars from Mount Lebanon, and covered all over with lead. As the timber of the roof decayed through age, and through the neglected condition into which it fell during the time of the Orders, the roof was all restored in 1480. In the neighbourhood of the tribune of the high altar the New Testament is set out in mosaic work.

"The Virgin Mary, who watches that church continually, did not permit it to be ruined completely. She granted grace to the venerable father Fra Giovanni Tomacello, who was Prior of Mount Sion about 1479, to rebuild the said roof. Having sought

[1] Braza in the original Italian. I take braza to be about the same measurement as dexteros in the Commemoratorium above.

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licence from the Sultan, he sent for two shiploads of prepared wood from Venice, and new lead that the King of England had sent, and with the divine aid, in a few days, the old roof was taken down and the new one built."[1]

XXXV. *Pietro Casola.*—In A.D. 1494 at any rate the internal decoration seems to have left little to be desired. Canon Pietro Casola, who wrote an account of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in that year, says of the church :—

* "The church at Bethlehem seems to me the most beautiful between Venice and Bethlehem. It is not only fine, but extremely beautiful. Besides the body of the church in the centre it has two shoulders, or, as we say, two naves, each supported by eleven columns, so thick that one man alone cannot put his arms round them. They are very tall and all of one piece. The church is all adorned with beautiful mosaics that look quite new. I was never tired of looking at the many beautiful pillars. I counted up to forty-four of them. . . . The said church is inhabited by a sect called Armenian Christians, although it is administered by the friars of Mount Sion. The Armenians, both big and little, male and female, live there on the ground like pigs. At the entrance of the church it is necessary to pay money to the Moors."[2]

At this point, A.D. 1500, the accounts of visitors may fitly end. For some time they have not had much that is fresh to say about the church, and their impressions, like those of Casola, are only interesting owing to their individuality. The reason is probably, as already suggested, that they only repeat the traditions which were locally current, or were manufactured to meet the demands of the immense number of pilgrims who periodically invaded Palestine.

There are, no doubt, a few exceptional visits, but these have been noted more conveniently where their testimony is of value. So far as the direct sequence of visitors is concerned, the beginning of the sixteenth century practically concludes their historical importance.

* * * * * *

The foregoing accounts do not, as will have been seen, contribute much to the question of the date of the building. So far as their external evidence is of value, that is, where it is contemporary with, or only a comparatively short remove in time from, the fourth century, and is presumably first-hand—it tends to support the theory that the church was built by Constantine.

The statement of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, having regard to the date, is of prime importance. He would be almost an exact contemporary of the building, and he speaks in no doubtful terms of its construction "by order of Constantine."

[1] The original is to be found in Suriano's "Trattato di Terra Santa e dell 'Oriente," 1900 (ed. Golubovich, Milano) c. lxvi, p. 121. Much of the above translation is my own, and I ask indulgence for the obscurities of mediæval Italian. The word I have translated "parts" appears as "parate," for which I cannot discover any equivalent. The passage is referred to, and in part translated, in Casola (v. note infra) p. 389, note 83. The part from "The Virgin—new one built," appears in *codice* N. 58 only.

[2] The original, written in mediæval Italian, is translated by M. M. Newett (Manchester Univ. Press), 1907, Canon Pietro Casola's *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem*, p. 264.

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St. Paula is silent—how valuable her testimony, or Jerome's would have been—but we have a definite tradition (repeated in Jerome) that, when she died in A.D. 400, her body was placed in the middle of the church of the Grotto of the Saviour, remained there three days, and was then buried "under the church by the side of the Grotto of the Lord."

The relegation of St. Ætheria to the sixth century deprives supporters of the Constantinian ascription of a valuable witness. She is not very far removed in time still, and is positive on the point of Constantine's having built the church under the supervision of his mother.

Of the historians, Eusebius is of course the most valuable witness for the Constantinian ascription, while the concurrence of Socrates and Sozomenes—practical contemporaries also—greatly strengthens the case.

The rival theory which ascribes the church, or the church as we know it, to Justinian, is found only in Eutychius, who, as already mentioned, wrote long after the event (whether the church was founded in the fourth or sixth century). It will be noted that no visitor to the church appears to have heard of Justinian having built it, or even as having restored it.

H. A. A. C.

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CHAPTER V

THE CAVE OF BETHLEHEM

THE "Cave" of Bethlehem is one of those sacred sites which were earliest honoured in Christian tradition, and the evidence for its identity goes back to the beginning of the second century. This evidence is both direct and indirect. Perhaps the earliest definite testimony is that of Origen, who in his work against Celsus (249 A.D.) writes as follows: "Corresponding to the narrative in the Gospel about His birth, there is shewn the Cave in Bethlehem where He was born, and the manger in the cave where He was wrapped in swaddling clothes. And this cave which is shewn is well known in those parts, even among those who are not believers, as the place in which Jesus who is worshipped and lauded by Christians was born."[1]

This definite testimony is corroborated by the statement of Justin Martyr who in the Dialogue with Trypho (155-160. A.D.) tells us that "when at that time the Child was born in Bethlehem, since Joseph had not in that village a place to lodge in, he lodged in a certain cave near the village."[2] This implies that the tradition of a cave, and a particular cave, already existed.

Still earlier testimony is afforded by Jerome. In a letter to Paulinus he says: "From the time of Hadrian to the reign of Constantine—a period of about one hundred and eighty years—the spot which had witnessed the Resurrection was occupied by a figure of Jupiter, while on the rock where the Cross had stood, a marble statue of Venus was set up by the heathen and became an object of worship. The original persecutors indeed supposed that by polluting our holy places, they could deprive us of our faith in the Passion and the Resurrection. Even my own Bethlehem, as it now is, that most venerable spot in the whole world, of which the psalmist sings, '*The truth hath sprung out of the earth*,' was overshadowed by a grove of Tammuz, that is of Adonis; and in the very cave where the infant Christ had uttered his earliest cry, lamentation was made for the paramour of Venus."[3]

This statement of Jerome corresponds to the tradition preserved by Eusebius,[4] that Hadrian, as part of his deliberate purpose to build a Roman city

[1] Origen *c. Cels.* I. 51.
[2] Justin Martyr. *Dial. c. Tryph.* 78 (cf. 70).
[3] Hieron. *Ep. ad Paul.* 58, 3.
[4] Eus. Caes. *Vita Const.* iii. 26.

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in the place of Jerusalem, had erected on the site of the Temple, a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and on the site of the Tomb of our Lord, a temple dedicated to Venus. Jerome tells us (and his statement is quite probable) that the same policy had been pursued at Bethlehem.

This testimony as to the desecration of the sacred sites in Palestine has a double importance. It proves that they were already identified and revered before the time of Hadrian, and it provided the evidence for the identification of the site in the time of Constantine. In the case of the cave at Bethlehem, the evidence of Justin and Origen is thus corroborated.

Some further evidence has been found in the statement of Cyril of Jerusalem that shortly before his time (350 A.D.) there was a wood at Bethlehem.[1] This has been interpreted as referring to the grove of Tammuz.

We do not know what was the origin of the tradition which transformed the stable at Bethlehem into a cave. An attempt has been made to derive it from the passage in Isaiah xxxiii. 16, where the Septuagint reads, "he shall dwell in a lofty cave of a strong rock."[2] But this is singularly far fetched. The early Christian writers wrenched Scripture from its context to find a prophecy which had been fulfilled, but no one would have applied this passage to the birth of our Lord with which it had nothing to do, unless the tradition of the cave came first.

Colonel Conder and others have pointed out that caves are, and always have been, used as stables in Palestine, and this additional fact which tradition has preserved is some slight evidence that the site may be authentic. What reason had Justin or later writers to identify the place with a cave unless there was some tradition in their time associating the cave with the birth of Our Lord?

The matter is not an important one, nor is the evidence conclusive, but there is every reason to believe that early in the second century a cave in Bethlehem was shewn as the place of the birth of Our Lord, that the very means taken by Hadrian to pollute this as other sacred spots perpetuated the tradition, that this cave was pointed out in the middle of the third century when Origen wrote, and that Helena when she wished to build a church on the holy place would have no difficulty in identifying the site.

A. C. H.

[1] Cyr. Hieros. *Cat.* xii. 20.
[2] Is. xxxiii. 16 (lxx) *οὗτος οἰκήσει ἐν ὑψηλῷ σπηλαίῳ πέτρας ἰσχυρᾶς.*

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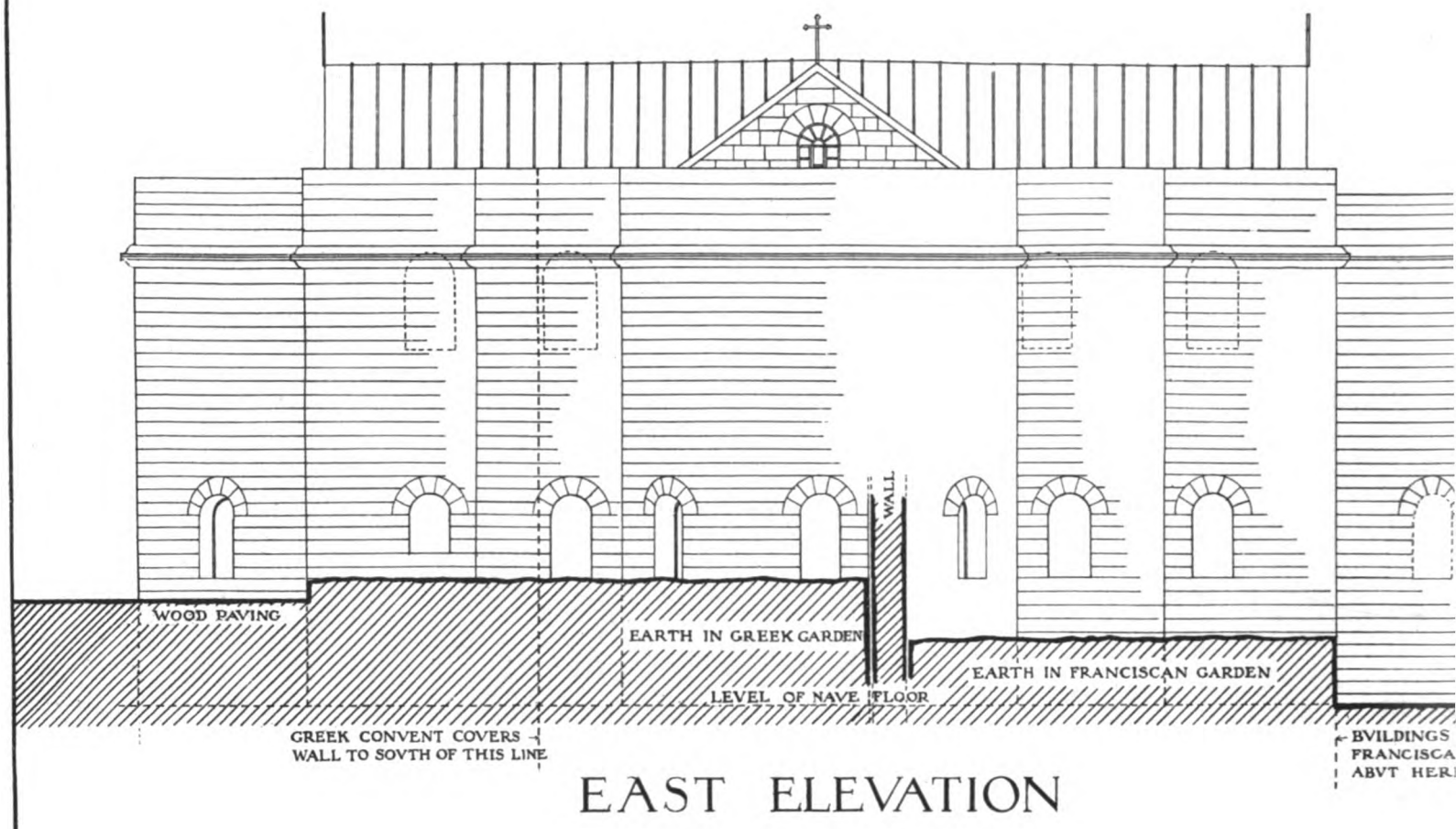

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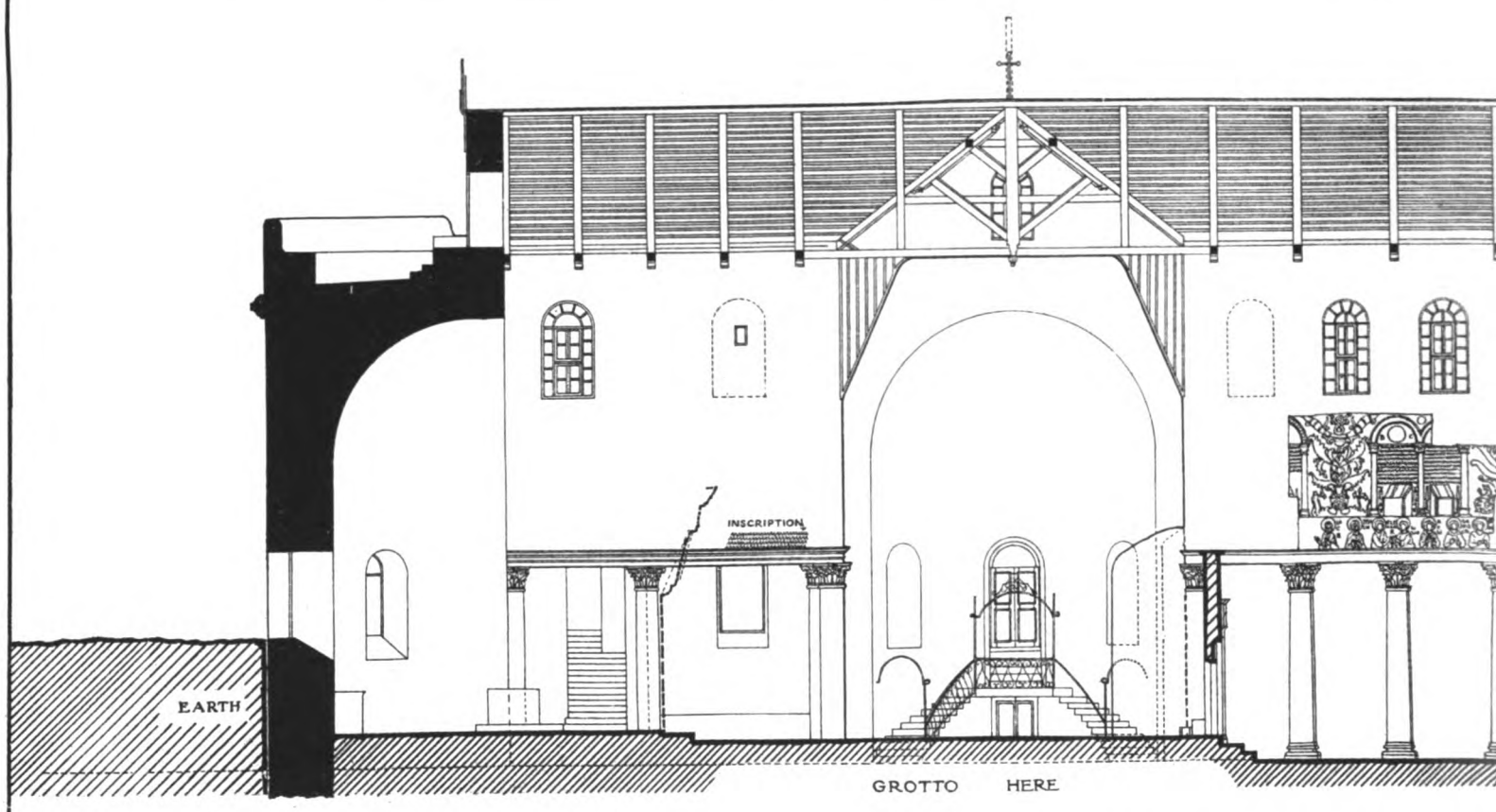

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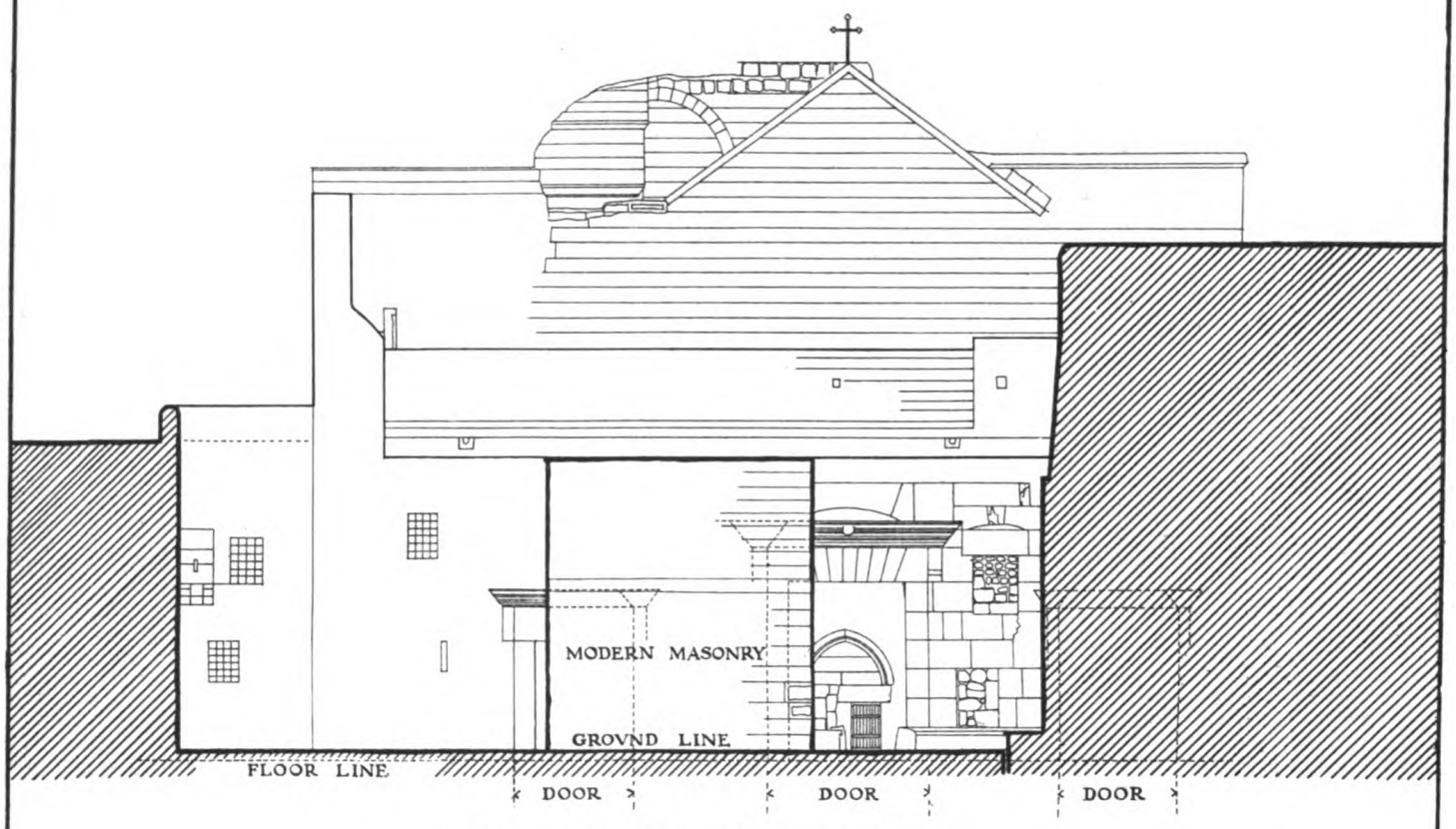

WEST ELEVATION

SECTION

30 40 50
FEET

20
ETRES

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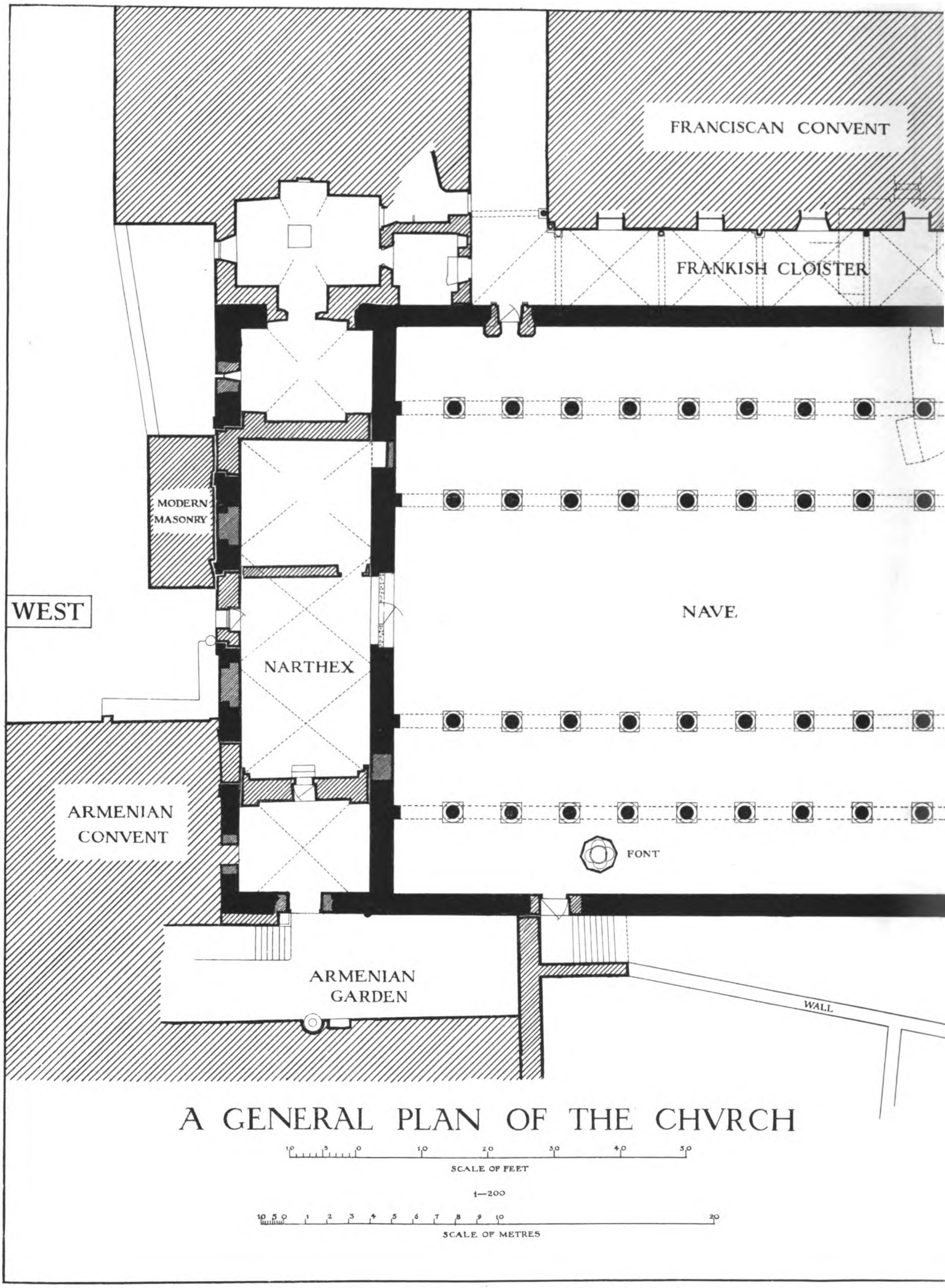

A GENERAL PLAN OF THE CHVRCH

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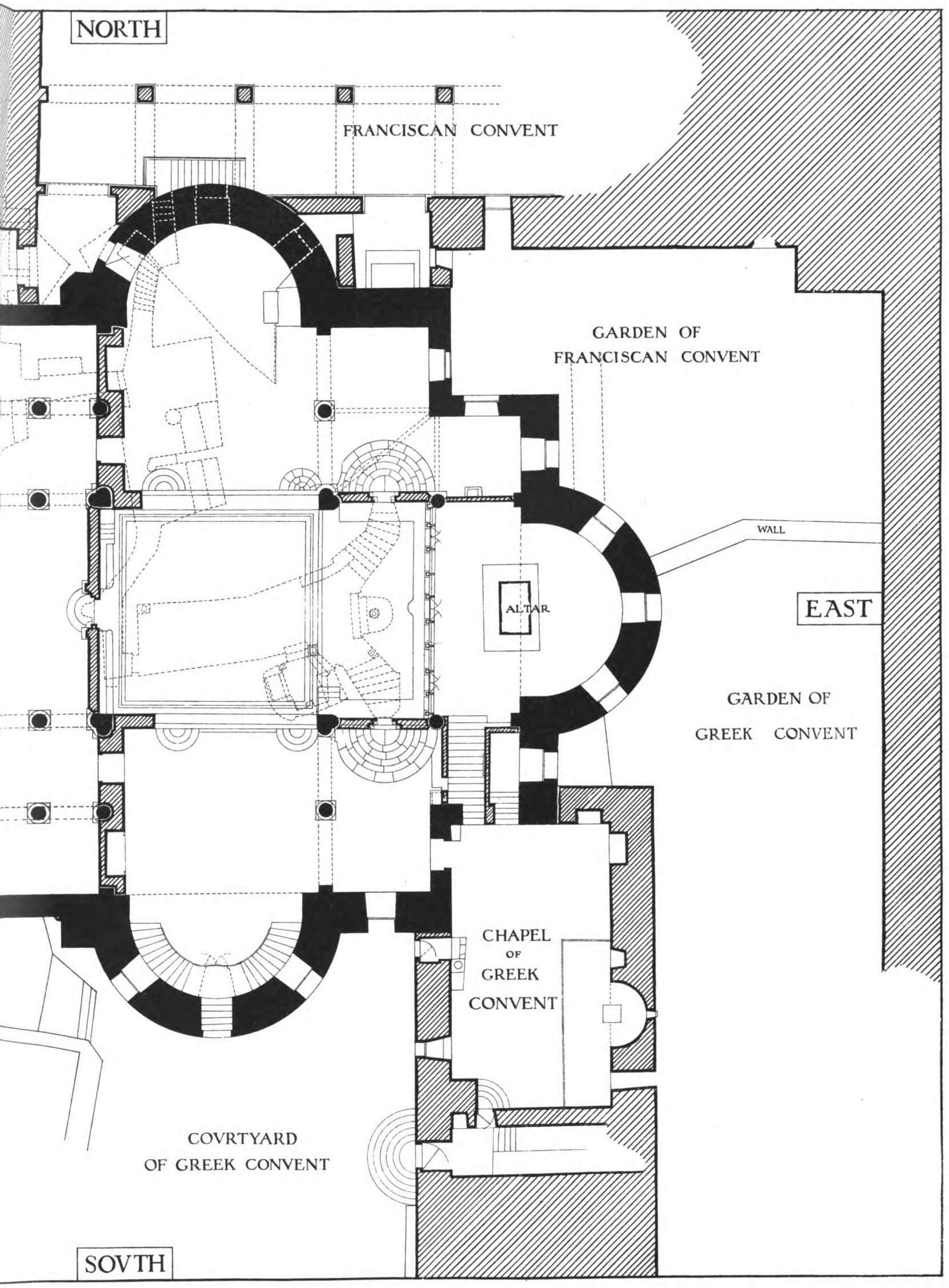

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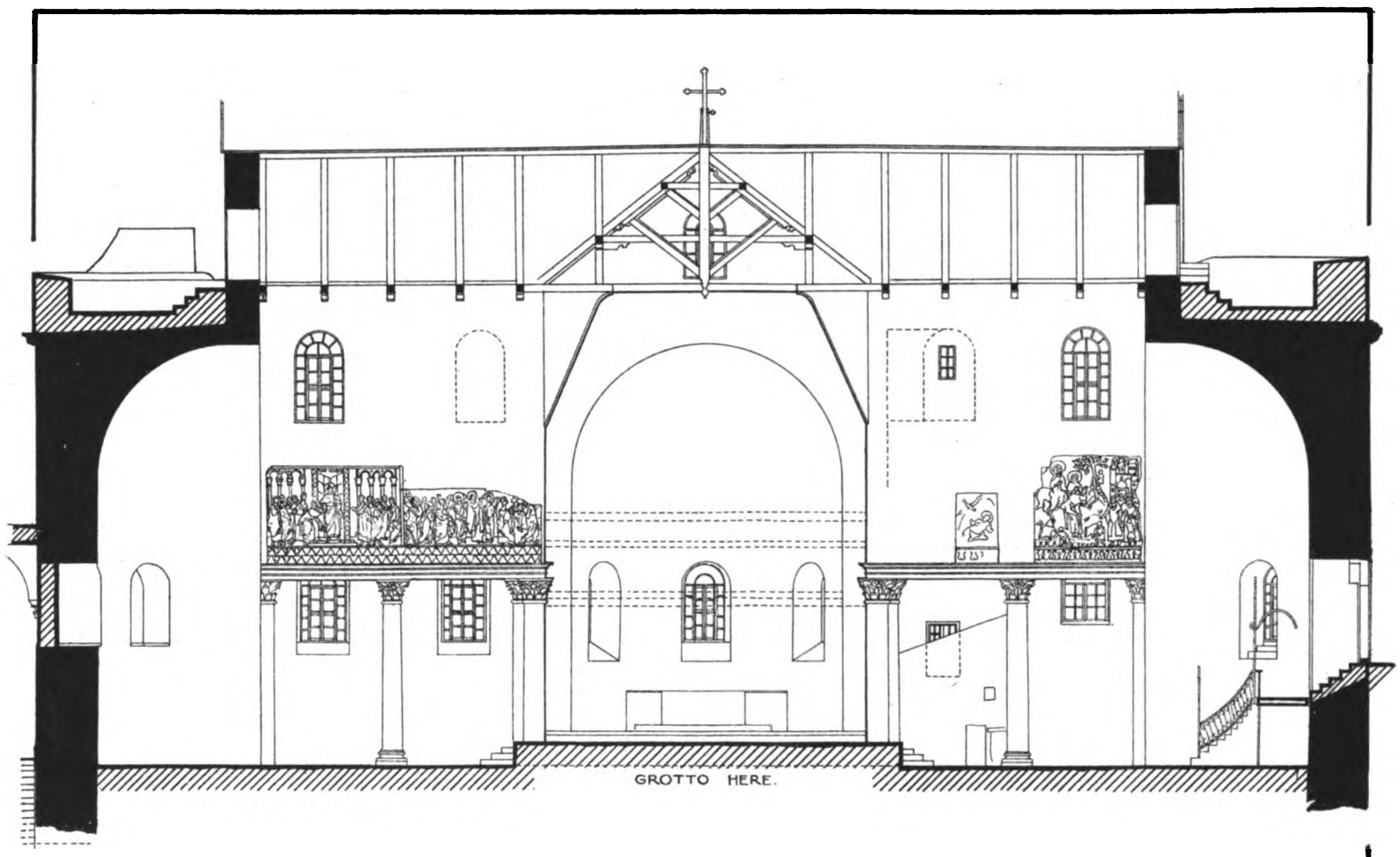
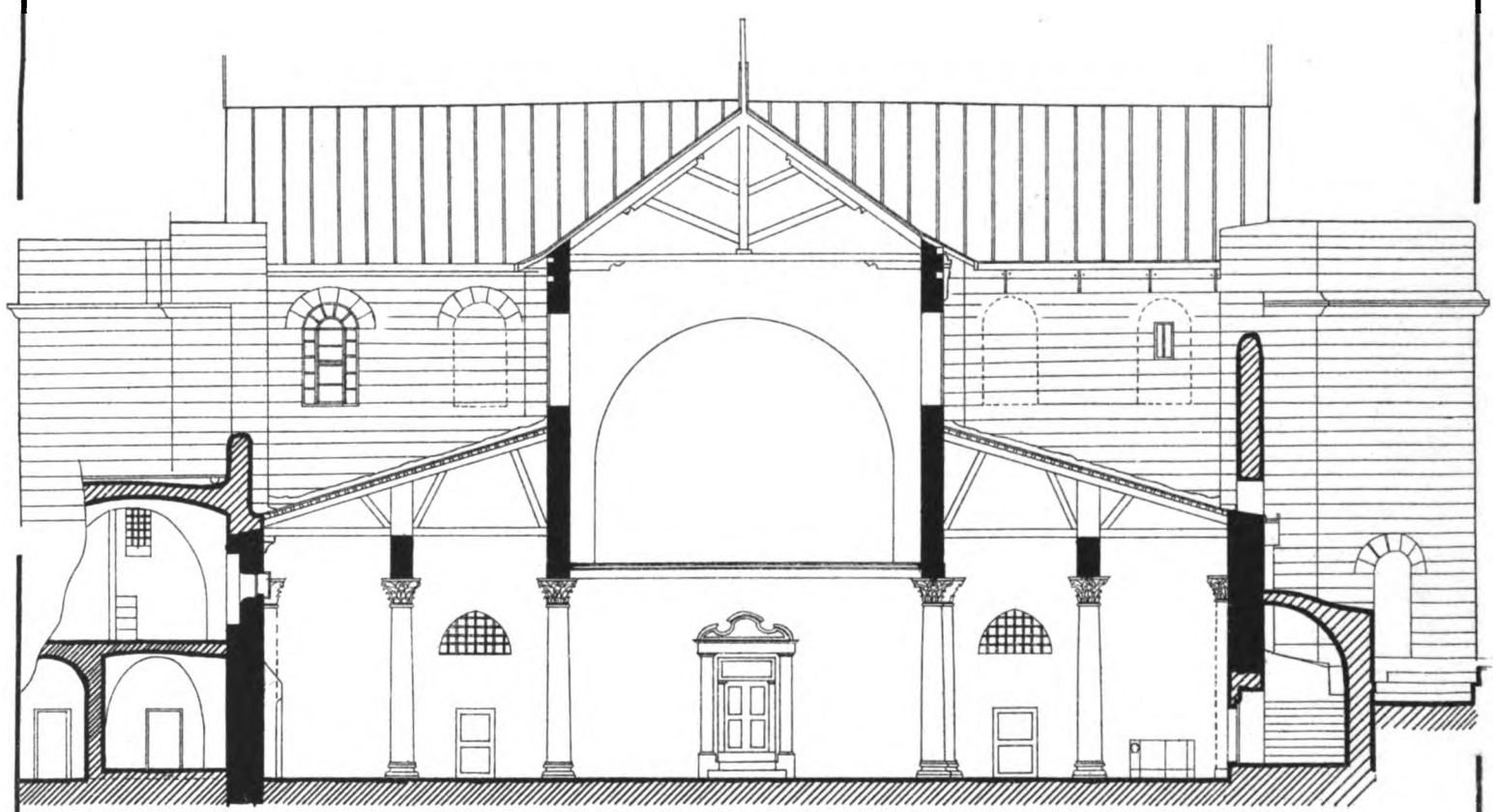


CROSS SECTION THROVGH TRANSEPTS



CROSS SECTION THROVGH NAVE

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50

SCALE OF FEET

1—200

10 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 20

SCALE OF METRES

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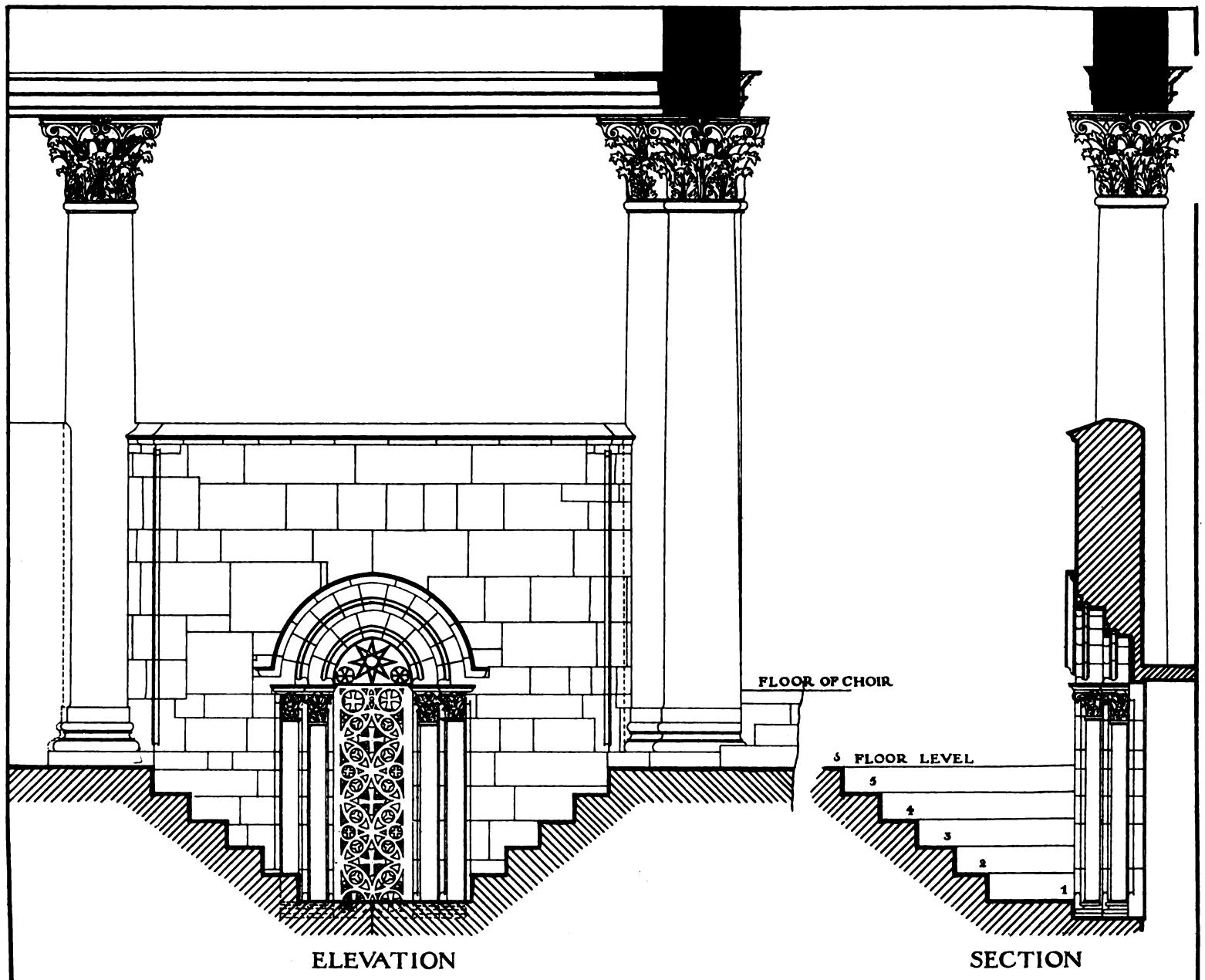

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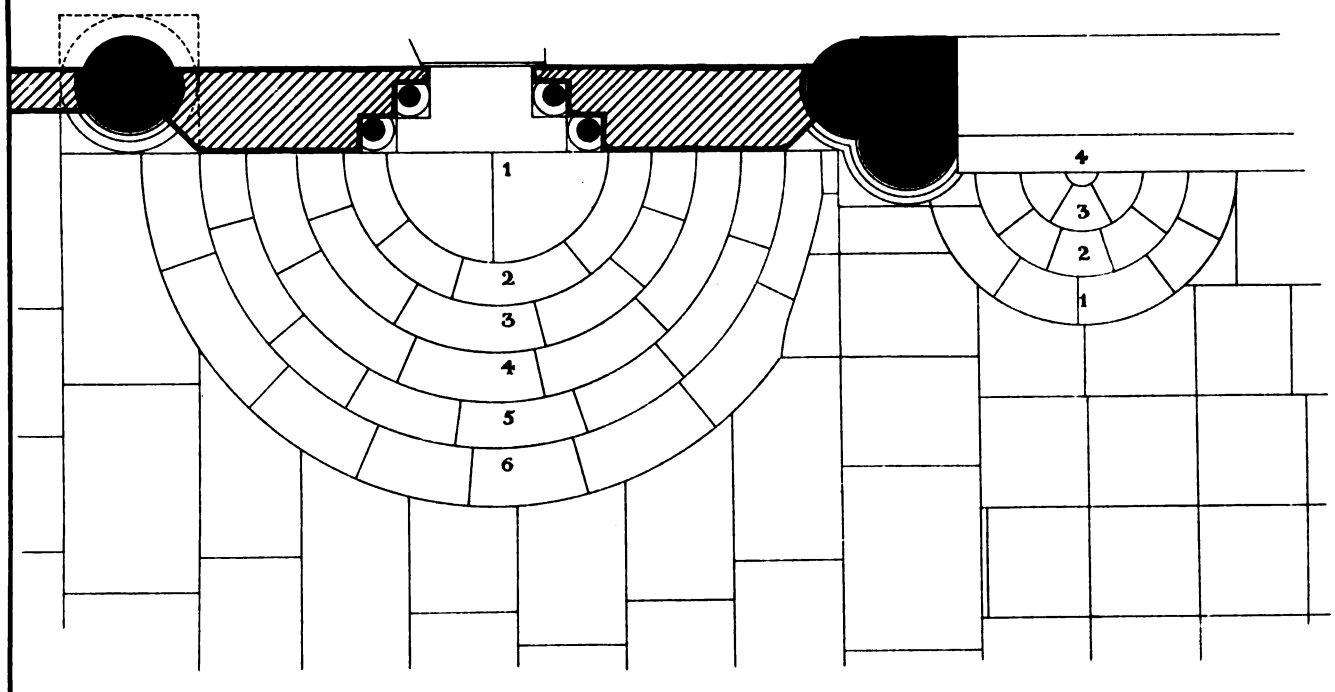
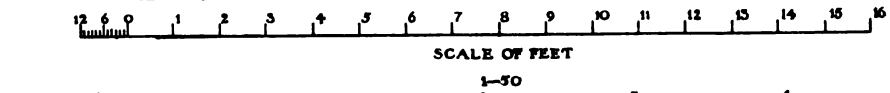


DOORWAY TO GROTTO



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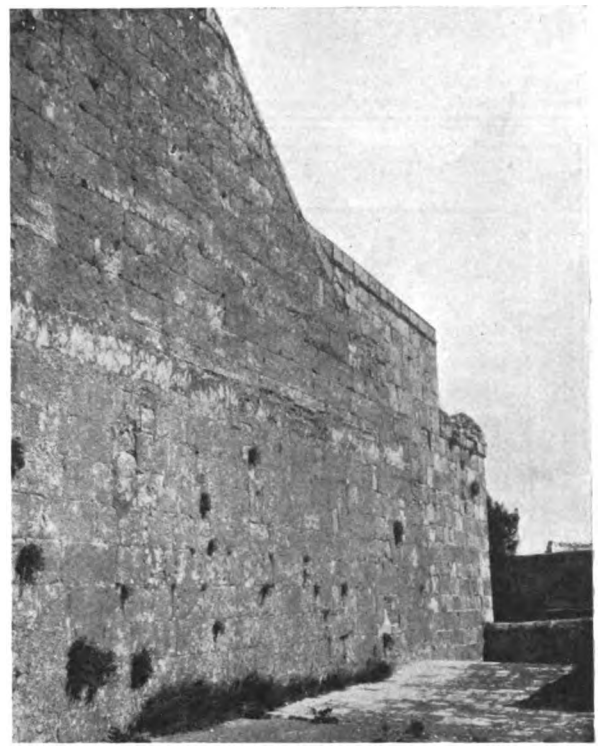
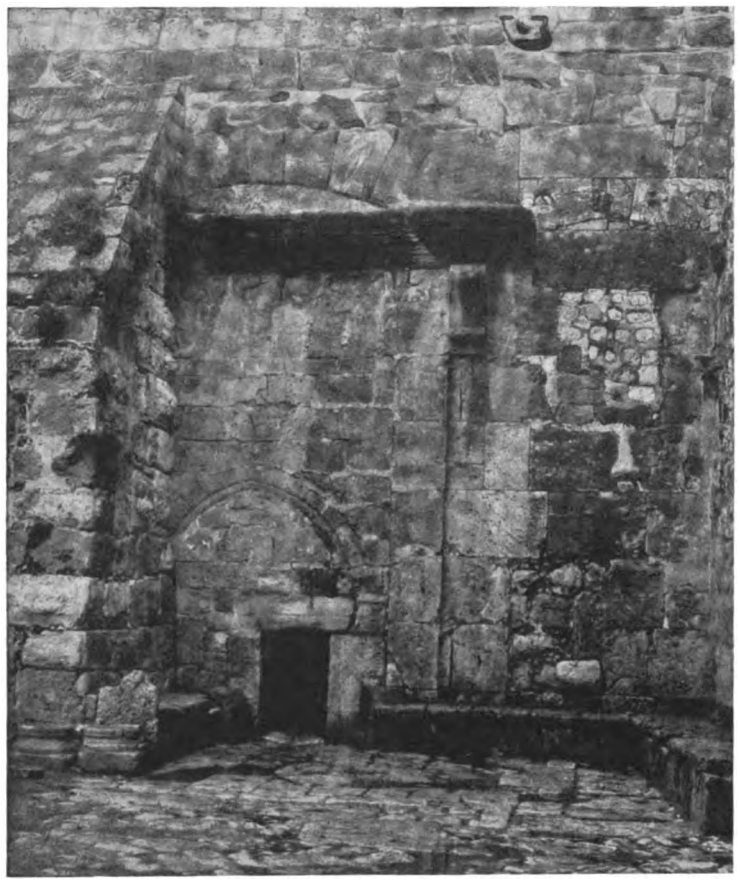
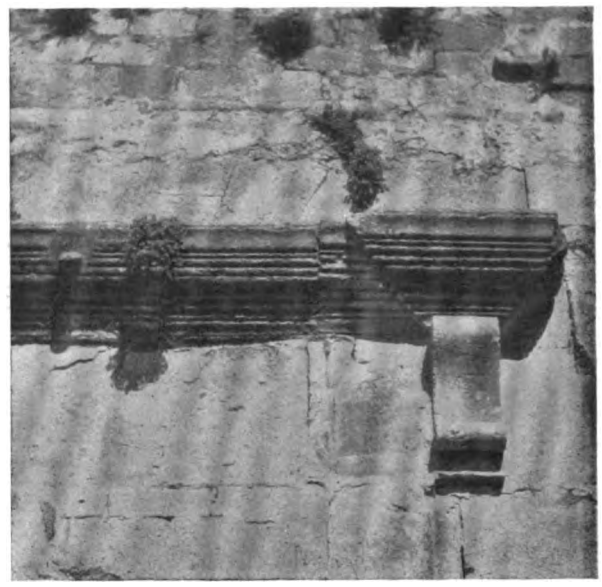


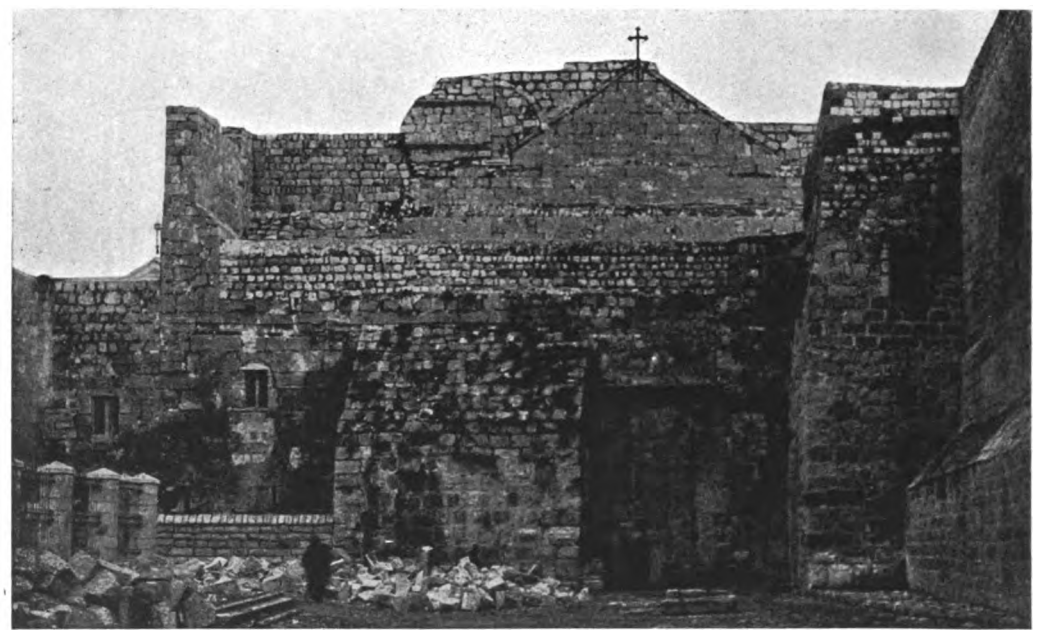
2. PORTION OF UPPER WEST WALL AND ROOF OF NARTHEX.



3. DETAIL OF CENTRAL DOORWAY.



4. DETAIL OF CORNICE OF DOOR.



5. GENERAL VIEW OF WEST FRONT.

EXTERIOR: VIEWS OF WEST END.

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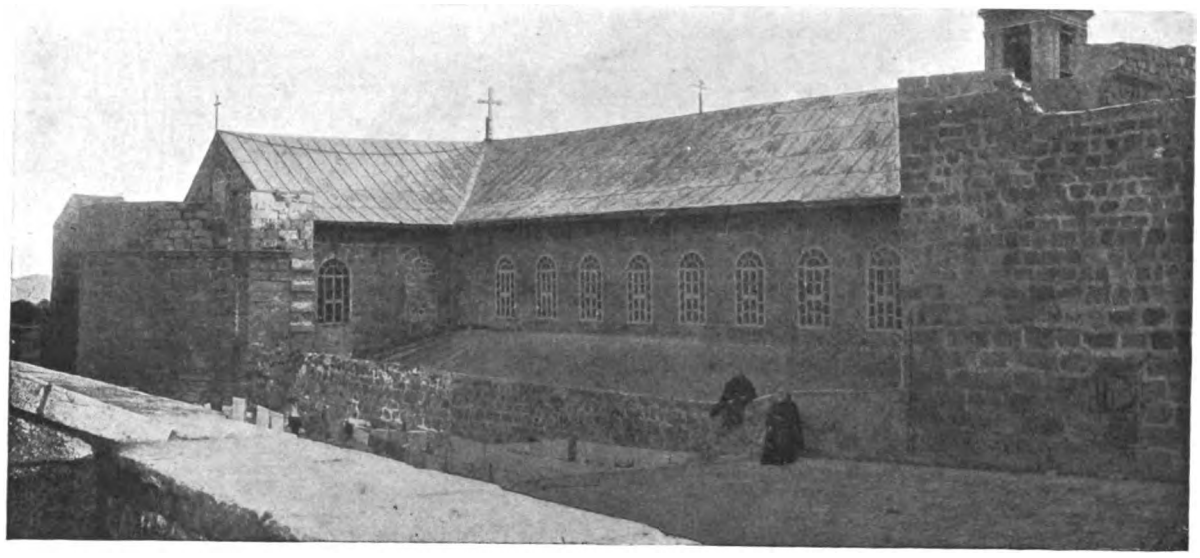
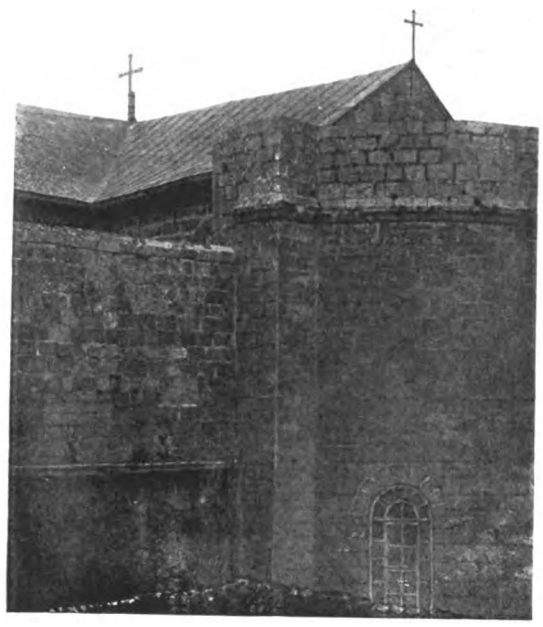
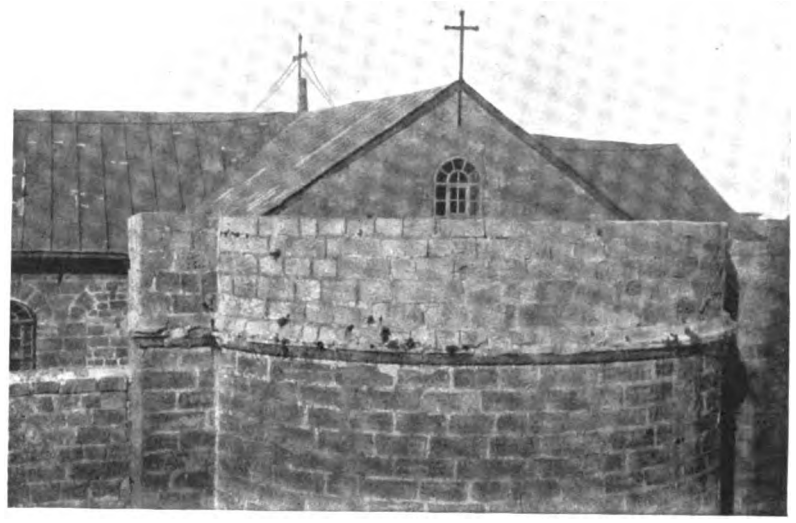


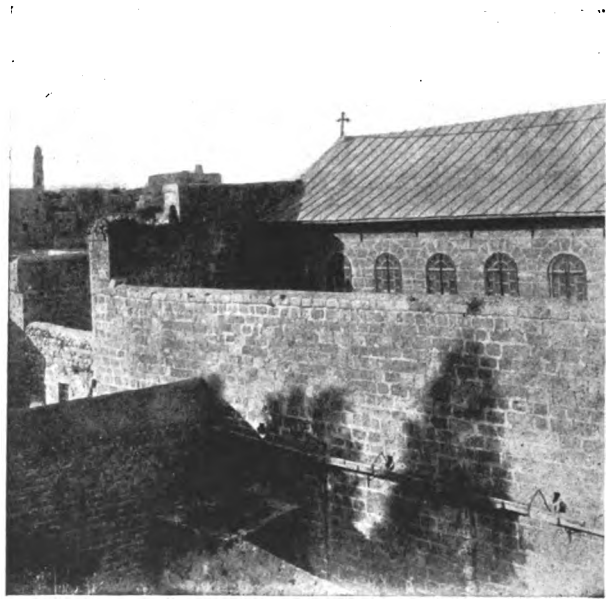
1. NORTH SIDE OF CHURCH, LOOKING SOUTH-EAST.



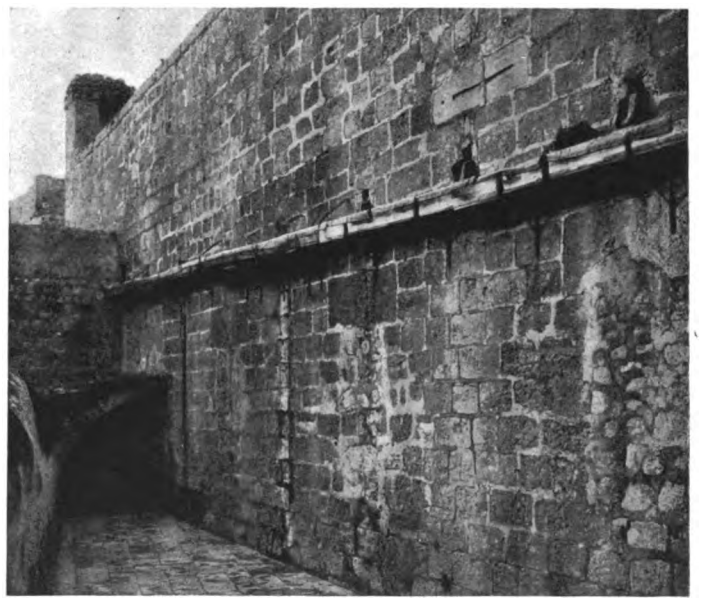
2. PORTION OF SOUTH WALL AND APSE.



3. UPPER PART OF SOUTH APSE AND GABLE.



4. SOUTH WALLS, LOOKING NORTH-WEST.



5. SOUTH WALL OF NAVE AISLE.

EXTERIOR: VIEWS OF NORTH AND SOUTH SIDES.

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DETAIL OF CAPITAL OF SOUTH-EAST PIER.

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DETAIL OF ONE OF THE CAPITALS OF THE NAVE.

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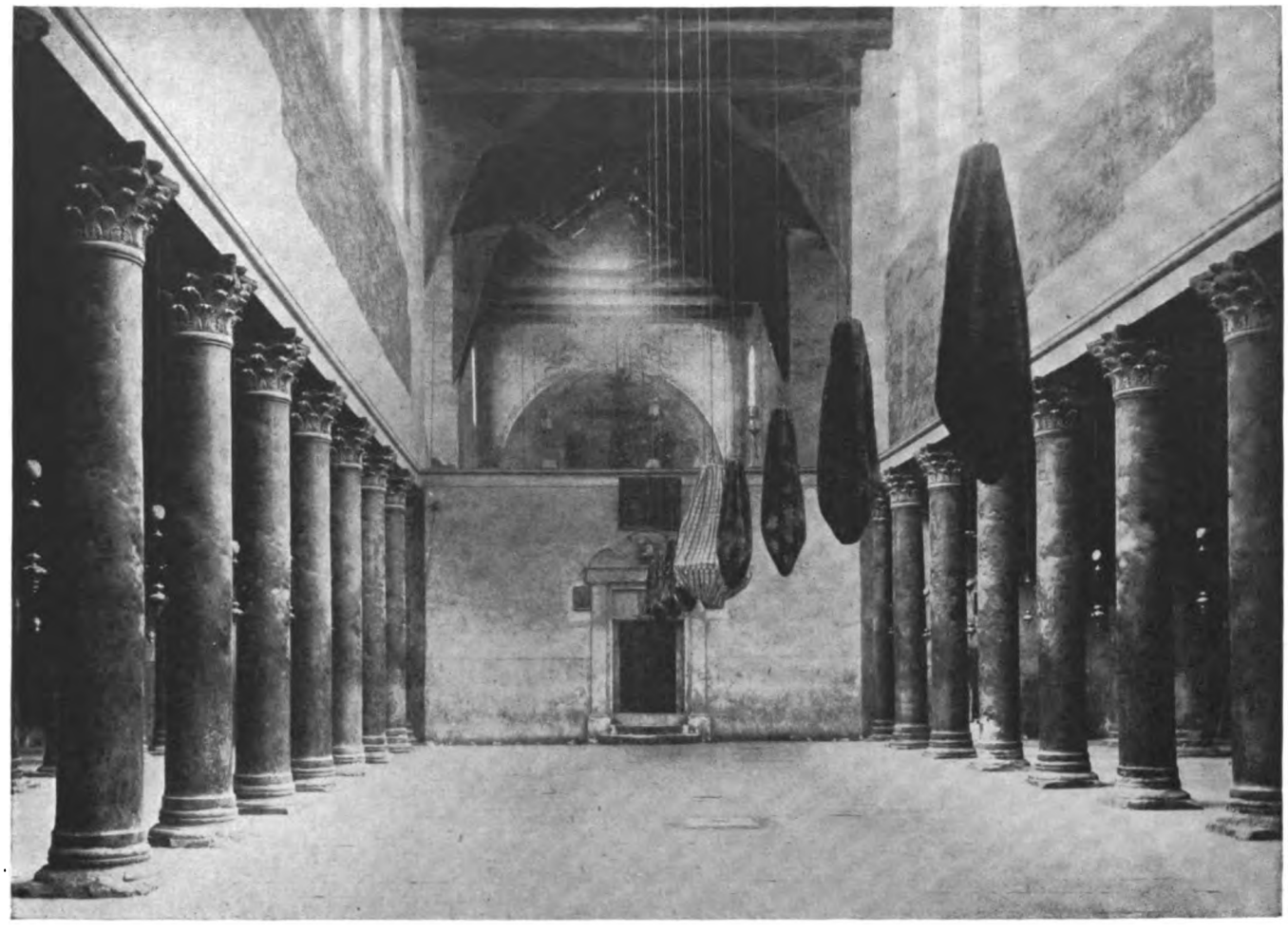

1. INTERIOR OF NAVE, LOOKING EAST.

2. SOUTH TRANSEPT, LOOKING NORTH-EAST.

INTERIOR: VIEWS IN NAVE.

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CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY. BETHLEHEM

7TH WINDOW

8TH WINDOW

BASI
LIVS
PIC
TOR

+CAPA ΦIKH

+ΗΑΓΙΑ CYNOΔOC ΗΘΕΝCΑΡ
ΔΙΚΗΤΩΝΡΜΕΠΙCΚΟΠΩ
ΦΕΓΟΝΕΝΔΙΑΤΟΥCΑΡΙΟΥCΑΘ
ΑΝΑCΙΟΝΤΟΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΙΝΜΕ
ΛΕΤΙΤΟΝΑΝΤΙΟΧΕΑCΤΙΑΛΑΚΩΝ
ΦΑΝΤΙΝΟΠΟΛΕΟCΑΙΤΟΚΑΑΦΗ
ΕΝΤΟΙCΙΔΙΟΙCΑΥΤΟΘΡΟΝΟΙCΗCΑΝ
ΓΑΡ ΦΙΑΝ

10 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

SCALE OF FEET 1-25

MOSAICS ON NORTH

LINE OF TOP OF ARCHITRAVE OVER PILLARS

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LINE OF BOTTOM OF CORBELS OF ROOF

9TH WINDOW

10TH WINDOW

HANTIO XIA

ΑΓΙΑCΥΝΟΔΟCΗΕΝΑΝΤΙ
ΟΧΕΙΑΠCCΥΡΙΑCΩΝΑΓΕΠΙ
CΚΟΠΩΝΠΡΟΤΗCΕΝΝΙCΑΟΙΚΟ
ΜΕΝΙΚΗC CΥΝΟΔΟΥΤΕΤΟΝΕΝΚΑ
ΤΑΠΑΥΛΟΥΤΟCΑΜΟCΑΤΕΩC
ΨΗΛΟΝΑΝΟΝΩΝΧΝΔΟΓΜΑ
ΤΙCΑΠCΤΩΝΗΑΓΙΑCΥΝΟΔC
ΩCΚΑ CAN
ΚΩC ΤΑΑ
ΦΡ ΠΕΡ

WALL OF NAVE

10 5 0 1 2

SCALE OF METRES 1 – 25

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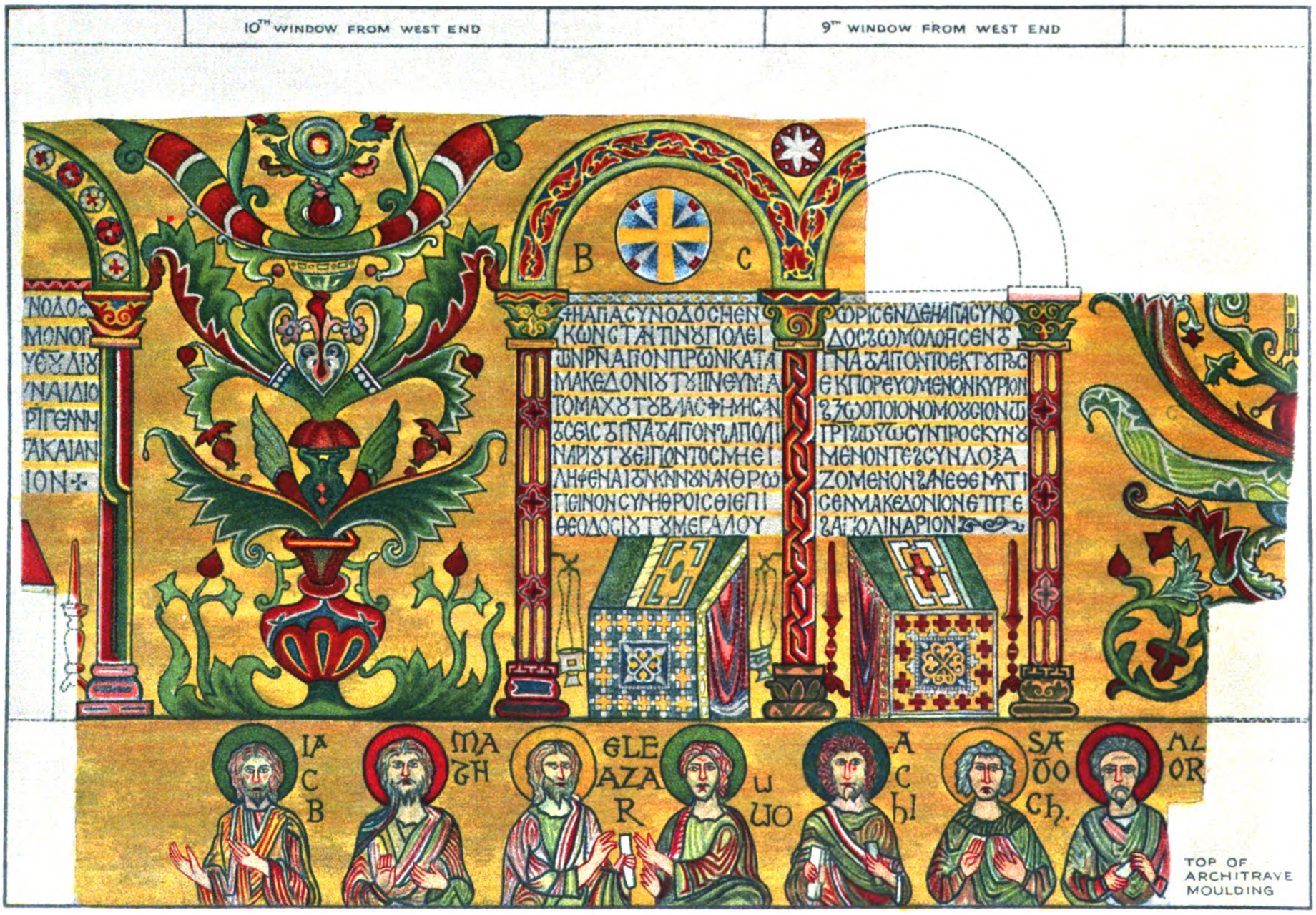
LINE OF
NORTH WALL
OF TRANSEPT

MOSAICS ON EAST WALL OF NORTH TRANSEPT



TOP OF
ARCHITRAVE
MOULDING

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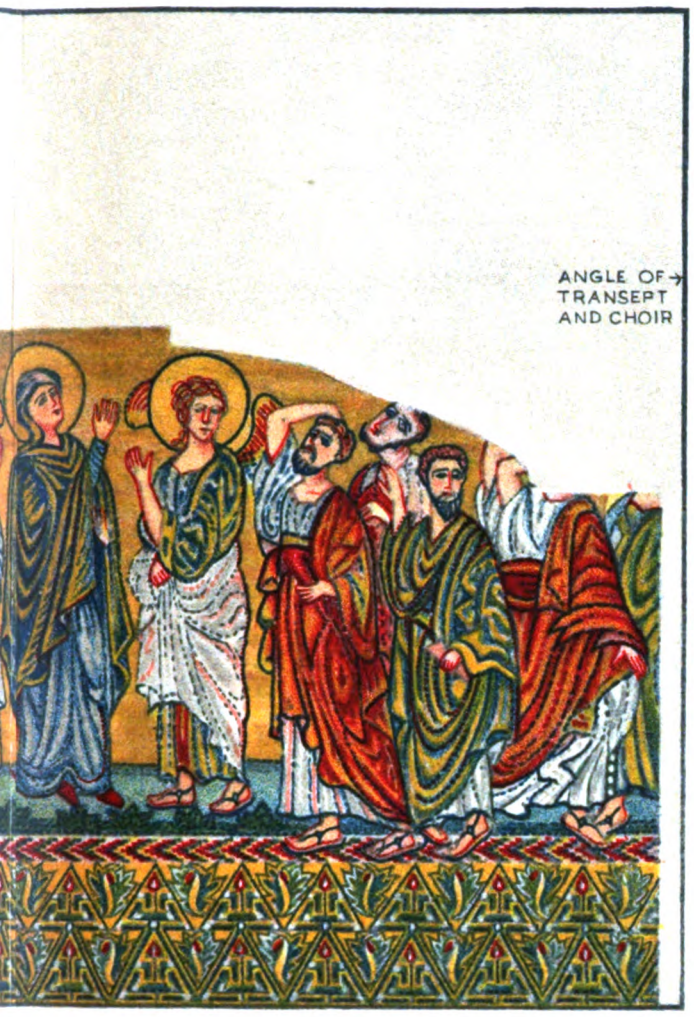

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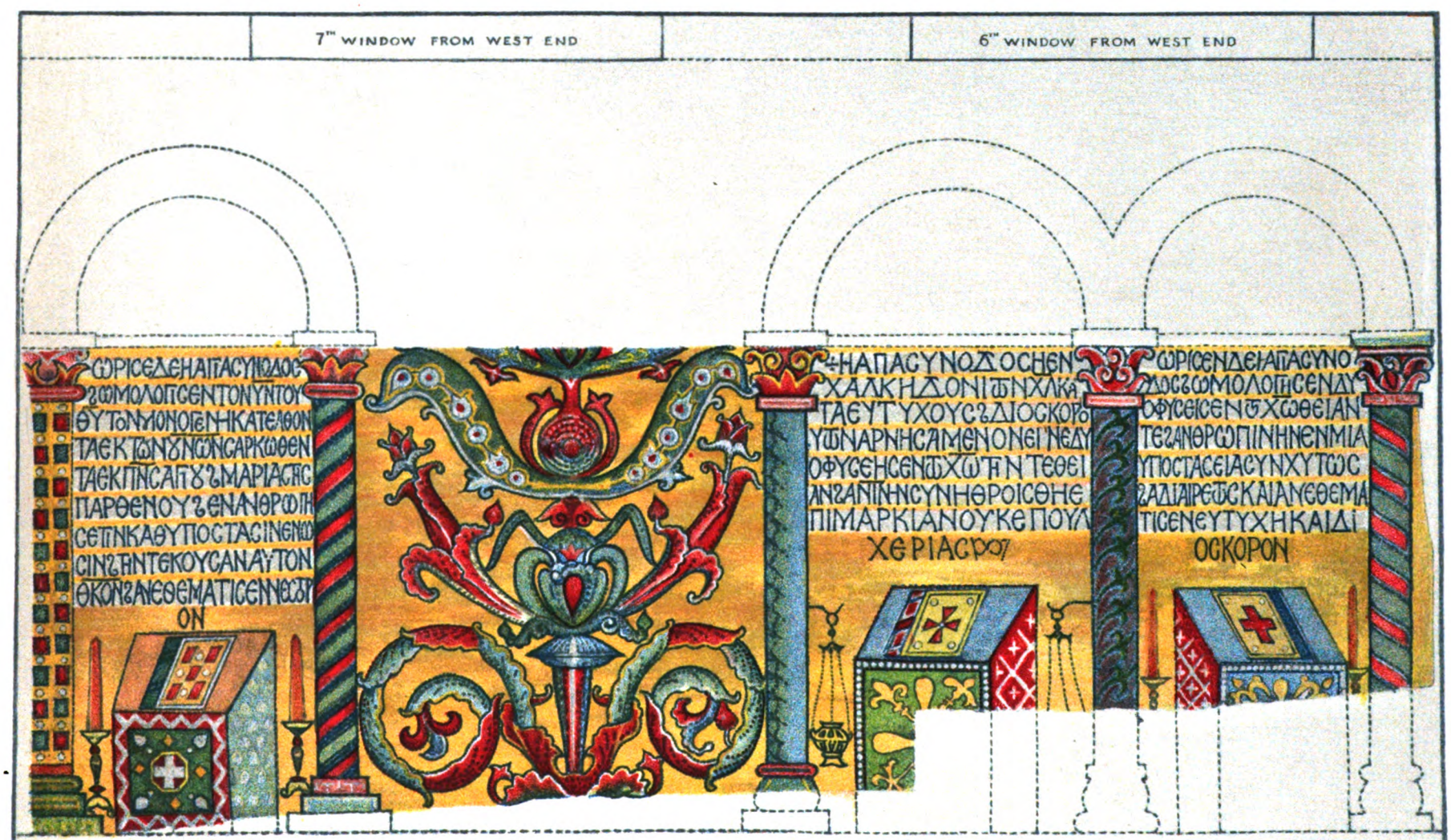
ON EAST WALL OF SOUTH TRANSEPT



MOSAICS ON SOUTH WALL OF NAVE

1 – 25

TOP OF ARCHITRAVE MOULDING

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CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM.

PORTION OF MOSAICS ON NORTH WALL OF NAVE.

PORTION OF MOSAICS ON SOUTH WALL OF NAVE.

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